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# THE SOVIET JEWISH SITUATION: A PROGRESSIVE VIEW

by

Max  
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A Jewish Currents Reprint

One Dollar

MORRIS U. SCHAPPES, editor of JEWISH CURRENTS since 1958, was Adjunct Professor of History at Queens College of the City University of New York, 1972-1976. He is the author of "A Pictorial History of the Jews in the United States," of "A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States 1654-1875," of "Selections from the Prose and Poetry of Emma Lazarus," of "The Letters of Emma Lazarus" and of many pamphlets and articles. He received the Holocaust Memorial Award of the New York Society of Clinical Psychologists on April 26, 1979.

DR. LOUIS HARAP has been a member of the Editorial Board of JEWISH CURRENTS since 1948 and has written voluminously on many aspects of Jewish life and Jewish problems. In addition to many articles in both popular periodicals and learned journals, his books include *Social Roots of the Arts* (1949) and *The Image of the Jew in American Literature*, issued in 1975 by the Jewish Publication Society. His two-page feature, "It Happened In Israel," appears each month in JEWISH CURRENTS.

JEWISH CURRENTS REPRINT NO. 14  
(see list on back cover)

This reprint appeared originally in our issues of May, July-August, October and December, 1979 and May and June, 1980.

\$1 per copy/6 copies for ~~5~~ \$5  
Payment must accompany order.

JEWISH CURRENTS  
22 E. 17 St., Suite 601  
New York, N.Y. 10003  
(212) 924-5740

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## The Martyred Soviet Yiddish Writers

By MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

WE here have just stood for a minute of reverential silence, in meditation and remembrance. In past years, since we first learned in 1956 about the night of Aug. 12, 1952, each of us may have observed that dread day privately; now for the first time we do so together publicly—transforming a personal anguish into a shared communal experience as progressive Jews.

What is it that we are remembering? We know, unofficially, that from July 11-18, 1952 a secret trial was held of 25 Yiddish writers, theater people, a trade union leader, a scientist and other notable Jewish figures. We know, unofficially, that 25 Jews were convicted on some kind of charges of nationalism. We know,

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*This address was delivered Aug. 21, 1979 at a memorial meeting jointly sponsored by JEWISH CURRENTS and Yiddishe Kultur at the Statler Hilton Hotel in New York.*

May, 1980

again unofficially, because no public record has ever been issued about this event in the USSR to this day, that during the night of Aug. 12, 24 of the 25 were executed—only the great scientist Lina Shtern escaping the death penalty.

Among the executed were:

- David Bergelson, aged 68
- Itzik Feffer, aged 51
- Dovid Hofshstein, aged 63
- Leib Kvitko, aged 61
- Solomon Lozovsky, aged 74
- Peretz Markish, aged 56
- Yitzhak Nusinov, aged 63
- Shmuel Persov, aged 62
- Eliahu Spivak, aged 62
- Benjamin Zuskin, aged 53.

That makes 10 names that we know. We do not know for certain the names of the other 14, nor even where the 24 are buried, or even whether they were buried. We do not know because what we consider an open crime is regarded by the officialdom as a closed book. Among the things we need to get done is to open that book.

We are here because of our sense of loyalty to the ideals for which the Soviet Jewish martyrs lived, and died so unnaturally, but also out of a sense of indignation, of outrage, of wrath that those ideals could have been so betrayed. We remember, and to remember is to protest. Those who insist on forgetting, on letting bygones be bygones, on accepting the crimes as *faits accomplis*, pave the way for continuation of crimes, stand in the way of rehabilitating Soviet Jewish culture, and thereby also rehabilitating the soiled reputation of socialism in the USSR.

We remember, we mourn, we cry out against the evil. We mourn of course for the creative lives so brutally mistreated, so callously ended. But it was not only individuals who

were done to death, and their immediate families who were bereaved—and continually harassed in their bereavement. An entire literature, an entire Jewish culture was undermined.

**Now we do not believe in the resurrection** of the individual, although individual public rehabilitation in the form of restoration to dignity, merit and honor are well due and overdue. We do believe, however, in the resurrection of a literature, of a culture. So long as there are Soviet Jews there is the possibility and the need of the perpetuation, the revival, the recreation of a Soviet Jewish culture in Yiddish and other Soviet languages to express the life of the Soviet Jewish nationality. So long as this culture is repressed, we shall continue to struggle for its liberation. Betrayal must be followed by redemption.

I have said the martyrs were betrayed—what do I mean?

David Bergelson, for example, some time before 1931 wrote a story entitled "Citizen Wolf Brenner," which was first published May 10, 1933, shortly after Hitler came to power. In this story, Citizen Wolf Brenner, no longer Reb Wolf Brenner but Citizen Wolf Brenner, gets into a discussion on a train to Moscow with an engineer traveling to inspect factories, a German Jewish *spets*, who tells Citizen Brenner that he objects to the Soviets because they shoot people. Citizen Brenner answers by citing a Midrash to show that Jewish law sanctions the execution even of women. The Soviets, Citizen Brenner insists, shoot people who deserve to be shot but "they don't shoot and they won't shoot me. Why? Because I don't do what the others did! . . . I am Citizen Wolf

Brenner." (Tr. by Joseph Leftwich, the story is in his anthology, *Yisroel—The First Jewish Omnibus*.)

Bergelson believed that—we believed that. In fact, we believed because he believed.

Permit me a second example, this one from a beautiful poem, "*Biro-Bijaner Viglied*" (Birobidjan Cradle Song), as tender and memorable as Sholem Aleichem's cradle-song. Feffer begins (in my own translation):

Sleep, my child, shut both your eyes,  
Now the hills grow dim;  
Over us an eagle flies,  
Be, my child, like him. . . .  
Skipping a stanza, Feffer goes on:

Chains your granddad used to wear,  
Cold Siberian chains;  
Now this land is yours, I swear,  
Yours are all its gains. . . .

Skipping again, Feffer adds:

Hills and boughs here know no woe,  
Peace now fills our view.  
In the taiga children grow,  
Lucky ones, like you.

Then comes Feffer's conclusion, two stanzas that tear your heart *and* your mind:

To the Kremlin tidings go,  
Bright ones, child, I vow!  
We'll let Comrade Stalin know  
You are sleeping now!

Sleep, my child, shut both your eyes,  
Now the hills grow dim;  
Over us an eagle flies,  
Be, my child, like him.

Feffer believed that—so did we. We believed because he believed.

Bergelson was betrayed, Feffer

was betrayed, we were betrayed—socialism was betrayed.

Permit me to add a personal note at this point: I made this translation of Feffer's poem (and of several others) in unusual circumstances. Feffer's book *Heimland* was sent to me by my wife while I was in Walkill State Prison—for political activities. I asked for the book when I learned the ICOR had published it and the prison authorities allowed me to receive it. I had met Feffer and Mikhoels in New York in the fall of 1943, before I surrendered, and I wanted intensely to read Feffer's poems in this book now in my hand—which still has in it the Prison label with my name, my Prison number, and the date, June 17, 1944, when I received it. Reading the book in prison, I felt freer, knowing that Itzik Feffer, Major Feffer, was in the Red Army defending his country, and the world, from Nazism. Reading this book since then, out of prison, I have a continuing sense of being hemmed in, fettered, by the fateful betrayal of Feffer and his fellow-martyrs.

**Now we have come together today** not only to express our sorrow and continuing pain but also to express our hope and determination. What is it that we want, that we will continue to struggle to achieve? I offer aims that we are determined to pursue:

First, we shall work to help put an end to the extensive propaganda of anti-Semitism in the USSR by pressing for the enforcement of the Soviet Constitution and of Soviet laws that prohibit and punish anti-Semitism.

Second, we want the recognition in Soviet practice of what the USSR recognized in principle when it ratified the UN Convention on Human

Rights, which proclaims the inalienable human right of citizens of all countries to emigrate to another country of their choice as well as to return to the homeland if so desired. We believe all Soviet citizens are entitled to that right. We affirm that Jews, when their right to emigrate is recognized, should not be harassed for exercising that right, nor should they be humiliated by being forced to accept exit visas only to Israel whether they wish to emigrate to Israel or to any other country.

Appropriate here, it seems to me, is the reminder of Dr. Nahum Goldmann, honorary president of the World Jewish Congress and past president of the World Zionist Organization, one of the few statesmen of whom the Jewish people can boast. In his recent second autobiographical work, *The Jewish Paradox*, he writes (p. 172): ". . . if the USSR is accused, and often with good reason, of preventing emigration and making life difficult for its Jews, yet it should also be remembered that the Soviet government saved hundreds of thousands of our brothers by enabling them to escape from Nazism, and that without Russia the State of Israel would not exist today. . . . Israel must not forget what Ben-Gurion, with his usual courage, never ceased to point out. 'If I am now receiving you in a Jewish state,' he used to tell Israel TV reporters, 'it is a lot more thanks to the USSR than to the United States, because during our war of independence, when we were hemmed in by the Arab armies, we didn't get a single rifle from America.'" We, of course, have never forgotten this Soviet role, but it is to be hoped that those in the American Jewish community who have forgotten it will heed the wisdom of Nahum Goldmann.

I may add that while we affirm that elemental human right of emigration, we know that the majority of Soviet Jews will not emigrate and will continue to live in the USSR. I say we know this to be so on the basis of the fact that even what is known as the mass emigration of Jews from the Tsarist empire from 1880 to 1914 left the overwhelming bulk of the Jewish population *inside* the Tsarist empire. A look at the figures is illuminating. For example, in the period 1899 to 1910, the very peak of the East European immigration to the USA, there came into this country an average of 60,200 Jews from the Tsarist empire each year. That means that each year, however, only 125 out of every 10,000 Jews emigrated, while 9,875 Jews out of every 10,000 continued to live in the Tsarist empire. That is why, at the end of that mass emigration in 1914, the Jewish population of the Tsarist empire was as large as it was in 1880. The mass emigration had not produced a decline in the total Jewish population because the birth rate replenished the Jewish population and kept up with it.

Similarly, today, the emigration of some 170,000 Jews from the USSR in the past 10 years has not reduced the Soviet Jewish population. At the rate of an average of 17,000 Jews emigrating each year in the past decade, the rate of emigration per year is only 50 Jews out of every 10,000 if you use three million Jews as your base figure, or 68 out of every 10,000 Jews if your base is 2,500,000 Soviet Jews. Therefore the total Soviet Jewish population now is not smaller than it was 10 years ago despite the emigration simply because the natural increase in population (that is, the excess of the number of births over the number of

deaths among Jews) easily keeps up with the rate of emigration. That is why we regard the slogan of "Let my people go" as misleading and empty because there is no possibility of its being realized. The Soviet Jewish population will continue to be the third largest in the world today, next only to the Jewish populations of the USA and of Israel.

*It is for these millions of remaining Jews in the USSR that we shall try to achieve our third aim: full reconstruction of Soviet Jewish cultural and communal life, with the active encouragement of Soviet government and Communist party organs, in Yiddish and any other languages desired by Soviet Jews, with all the educational facilities necessary for the youth and for adults who have been administratively deprived of their history and culture. All that is required for such reconstruction is well within the scope of socialist theory on the national question.*

Finally, we seek from Soviet authorities full recognition in all relevant works and on all World War II monuments of the special role of Jews in the Hitler Holocaust that led to the death of 2,000,000 of the 5,000,000 Soviet Jews, 40% of the Soviet Jewish population—proportionately greater than that of any other Soviet nationality, and fully nine per cent of the total Soviet losses of 23,000,000, which also underlines the disproportion of Soviet Jewish losses resulting from Hitler's special program of extermination of the Jewish people. Hitler's special obliteration must be countered by special commemoration.

Thus, for example, when some 18 years after Yevtushenko's ringing protest that there was no monument to the Jews who died at Babi Yar a

monument finally is erected, we find that the special Jewish losses at Babi Yar are obliterated and homogenized into the losses of Soviet citizens, faceless, nameless and stripped of nationality. It was not always thus in Soviet official policy. When Molotov, the foreign minister of the USSR, issued an official note on German war crimes in Kiev on Jan. 6, 1942, he reported that precisely 33,771 Jews had been executed by the Germans at Babi Yar on Sept. 29 and 30, 1941, the eve and the day of Rosh Hashona (it was a malign design of the Nazis to begin actions to exterminate Jews on major Jewish holidays). Molotov also reported that in the three months after that, the Nazis had executed some 18,000 more Russian and Ukrainian prisoners of war as well as railway and factory workers. Furthermore, when in 1945 the Moscow State Publishing House issued a volume by K. Dubina, *German Crimes in Kiev*, she recorded that by Nov. 6, 1943, when the Red Army recaptured Kiev, the Germans had been responsible for the death of fully 200,000 citizens of Kiev, with the special figure of the number of Jews slaughtered at Babi Yar given as above. No wonder that the official United States Holocaust Commission was shocked when it visited the Babi Yar site on Aug. 3, 1979 and found the Jewish element obliterated from the monument and the Soviet guide trying to justify that obliteration. For the Jews of the USSR as well as for the other nationalities, we seek that the full truth be told of the nationality contribution to the victory of the multinational USSR in World War II and of the losses incurred, nation by nation, people by people.

These are the four aims we shall strive to help achieve over there.

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Over here, too, I believe we have a duty. The Soviet Yiddish writers and scholars were murdered, but their work lives on. We need more than the immortality of the shelf or the library catalog, or even of the memorial article or memorial meeting. We want them read—in Yiddish and in translation. We need more translations into English of this rich literature in prose and poetry. A worthy monument would be, say, a 20-volume collection of their best works in English translation. I should think the Jewish community in our country has the forces and the means for such a monumental undertaking. In this way we shall not only be remembering the martyrs but perpetuating them, keeping their works alive while we struggle to resurrect Soviet Jewish life and culture. ■

# Replying to Joshua Kunitz

## Anti-Semitism in The Soviet Union

By A. B. MAGIL

AS a longtime supporter of *New World Review*, who doubts that your picture-postcard views of Soviet life help promote American-Soviet friendship, I hoped for something different when I saw the title and author of an article in your Nov.-Dec., 1978 issue: "Literature as a Mirror of Soviet Society: How Jewish Characters Are Portrayed," by Joshua Kunitz. Kunitz' early writings about and translations of Soviet literature were pioneer contributions. And during several years of association when we were both editors of *New Masses* I came to value his scholarship, critical acumen and dedication to socialism.

Regrettably, in the article you published, the Joshua Kunitz of the past is unrecognizable. Evidently he and you intended the article to be what

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A. B. MAGIL, a member of the Editorial Advisory Council of our magazine, last appeared here in Jan. in a *Readers' Forum on Israel*. It was only after his "Reply to Joshua Kunitz" had been rejected by *New World Review* that he submitted it to us.

the first two paragraphs indicated: a refutation of the charges that anti-Semitic material has been appearing in Soviet publications. Examples of this material, according to Kunitz, "usually turn out to be Soviet condemnations of Zionism," or anti-religious writing which is not particularly directed at Jews as a people. Citing no examples of this material, Kunitz summarily dismisses the charges and turns to a different subject: the treatment of Jewish characters in contemporary Soviet literature. He enunciates the thesis that "the fundamental attitude of any society toward the people that make it up can be seen quite clearly by examining that society's literature."

There is a kernel of truth in this. But the Kunitz of the past was too sophisticated to believe—any more than Marx and Engels did—that there is a one-to-one relationship between social phenomena and their reflection in literature. Kunitz cites as evidence for his simplistic view his own early work, *Russian Literature and the Jew*, published in 1929. But he seems to have forgotten that that book does not support his thesis. It describes how, starting in the 1880s, when Tsarist Russia was pogrom-ridden and the masses were infected with virulent anti-Semitism, liberal writers—Chekhov, Gorki, Korolenko, Andreyev, Artsibashev—went counter to "the fundamental attitude" of their society and began to portray Jews not only favorably, but even to exaggerate their virtues and minimize their faults.

As for contemporary Soviet literature, Kunitz informs his readers—and here I must commend his candor—that he does not speak with the authority of 50 years ago. He concedes that his knowledge of present-

day Soviet writing is limited and derived mainly from *Soviet Literature* magazine. Of course, neither Kunitz nor (I hope) anyone else is so naive as to imagine that in this magazine, which is circulated abroad in several languages, anything even slightly pejorative toward Jews would be likely to appear. But even assuming that *Soviet Literature* reflects all of contemporary Soviet literature in its favorable treatment of Jewish characters, it would not necessarily disprove the charges that in political and "historical" articles, pamphlets and books, dishes with quite a different odor are being served to the Soviet public. A few samples:

Surely not a few readers will recall the international scandal stirred up in 1963 by the anti-Semitic (so-called anti-religious) book by Trofim Kichko, *Judaism Without Embellishment*, published by the Ukrainian Academy of Science in Kiev. Following much public clamor, a few months later Gus Hall, general secretary of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., stated: "There is no doubt in my mind . . . about the anti-Semitic character of what I have seen. Such stereotyped, slanderous caricatures of the Jewish people must be unequivocally condemned, whatever their source . . ." (*The Worker*, March 24, 1964).

Then the June, 1964 issue of *Political Affairs*, U.S. Communist Party monthly, stated: "In our opinion, it [Kichko's book] cannot be simply dismissed as an isolated incident, as the result of carelessness or failure to treat the question seriously by those involved. On the contrary, the book's appearance reflects the continued existence of anti-Semitic ideas and influences among individuals within the Soviet Union. . . . In recent years there have been other

books and articles containing anti-Semitic references or statements, indicative at the very least of a lack of sensitivity toward the question. . . ."

In Jan., 1968 Kichko was awarded a "Certificate of Honor" by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine. Today he continues to do business at the same old anti-Semitic stand. But Kichko's book and similar material appearing at that time were a mere trickle compared to the flood of anti-Semitic filth that began pouring from Soviet presses after the Israel-Arab war of June, 1967. A horde of hacks—Kichko, Yevgeny Yevseyev, Yuri Ivanov, Lev Korneyev, V. Skurlatov, Dmitri Zhukov, Vladimir Begun, V. Bolshakov and others—have been dredging up the falsifications of their Tsarist precursors, wrapping them in anti-Zionist and pseudo-Marxist phraseology, and presenting them in prestigious mass circulation publications.

Thus in the Nov. 16, 1977 issue of the Soviet Army newspaper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Lev Korneyev wrote: "But few people know that of the 165 merchants of death concerns in the West, 156 are controlled or actually belong to the pro-Zionist bourgeoisie of Jewish extraction." The same article also spoke of the "'Jewish Section' of the American mafia, the departments of the Secret Service of the World Zionist Organization (with its center in New York) and the U.S. CIA."

Korneyev also favored the readers of *Ogonyok* (issues of July 18 and 26, 1978), illustrated Moscow weekly with a circulation of two million, with a 6,000-word article in similar vein. After the first part appeared, *Neie Presse*, French Communist newspaper in the Yiddish language, protested editorially, citing such ex-

pressions as "bankers of Jewish origin," "Goldwater, linked to the Jewish-Sicilian mafia," "The Oppenheimers [of South Africa] of the Catholic faith but of Jewish origin," etc.

The Sunday supplement of *Izvestia* July 17-23, 1978 published still another piece by this prolific Jew-baiter, in which he wrote: "A main feature of the expansionist aspirations of the Jewish bourgeoisie is its fast growing financial might thanks to the monopoly of Jewish capital on an international scale and its constant search for new sources of profit. By following the line of expansion inherent in the capitalist system, Zionism strives to lay its hands on the military-industrial complex as the most profitable business sphere."

Similar ideas were expressed—this time not by an individual, but by the well-known Novosti News Agency of Moscow, which services left-wing newspapers in many countries. An anti-Semitic pamphlet, *The Sword of David*, which was distributed in English translation last summer at the Soviet Space Exhibition in Toronto until protests forced its withdrawal, contained an introduction by Novosti which stated: "As a result of the steady growth of financial potential of the leading Jewish bourgeoisie, its merging with the monopoly bourgeoisie of capitalist countries, and of the proportional increase of its influence in the world's economy and politics, world Zionism, with its financial-economic base, ideological complex and powerful organizational structure, which includes the state machinery of Israel, has become one of the leading facets in the system of world imperialism. . . . Today the role of world Zionism has significantly grown as an instrument in the struggle of the Jewish bourgeoisie

for consolidating its own positions in the world of capital, obtaining the highest profits, and furthering neo-colonial expansion in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia" (emphasis added).

Thus, not the Rockefellers, Morgans and Gianninis, not the preponderantly non-Jewish multinational corporations are the chief threat to mankind, but the Jewish bourgeoisie! The alleged domination of U.S. and world economy by Jewish capitalists is of course one of the standard fabrications of anti-Semitic propaganda.

**Some of this material is being specifically directed at the youth of the Soviet Union.** Here are a few excerpts from *Fascism Under a Blue Star*, a book by Yevgeny Yevseyev issued in 1977 by the Communist youth publishing house, Molodaya Gvardia: "Zionism is now without doubt a manifestation of fascism. It is distinguished from other known forms of fascism, first, in that Zionism is a broader, more ramified organization, and second, it is not confined within state or national frontiers (as was, for example, Hitler Germany or Mussolini's Italy), but is active in approximately 70 countries throughout the world" (p. 15). "It is known that the so-called holy books of Judaism not only justify but propagandize for wars and bloodbaths against non-believers" (p. 49). "As is known, there are concentrated in Zionist hands billions of dollars, with which they control 80 percent of the American and international agencies that service the newspapers and journals of almost the entire capitalist world" (p. 125).

One final tidbit: The Sept. 13, 1978 issue of *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, newspaper of the Communist youth organization, published an article by

V. Polezshaev which attacked alleged international conspiracies of the Masons and the Zionists (shades of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion!), "including the Zionist Masonic lodge B'nai B'rith." Wrote Polezshaev: "In Masonry are interested not only the monopolies, but also international Zionism—the shock brigade of the forces of imperialism and reaction. And not only because in the Masonic lodges the members continue to this day to bow before the Star of David and to light the menorah during rituals, and they read the sayings of the Jewish prophets."

The steady flow of anti-Semitic material moved a leading French Communist intellectual, Jean Ellenstein, in an article in the Oct. 13, 1978 issue of the popular weekly, *Paris Match*, to denounce "the publication in the Soviet press, without condemnation by the authorities, of articles of clearly fascist inspiration—like that in the journal *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. . . . Like Hitler, these articles denounce Freemasonry and Zionism, both inspired by Judaism. These theses . . . are repeated and developed in articles of the magazine *Ogonyok* and in books. And when one thinks that the word 'Komsomol' signifies Marxist-Leninist youth! Poor Marx and poor Lenin, whose names are being mixed into such a weird sauce, that of Goebbels and Rosenberg."

**These are strong words. The Soviet Union is a socialist and not a fascist country.** But just as under the Soviet system there emerged the anti-socialist crimes of Stalinism, so—despite the fact that anti-Semitism in the USSR is officially a crime punishable by law—Soviet publications are producing anti-Semitic diatribes that, except for the pseudo-Marxist phrase-

ology, are indistinguishable from material historically associated with fascism. To say that this material is mere "condemnation of Zionism" or "anti-religious writing" is either to display gross ignorance or to resort to deliberate coverup.

As evidence that all is well with the treatment of Jews in Soviet publications Kunitz cites the fact that *Soviet Literature* recently "paid a highly significant tribute to" Aron Vergelis, editor of the Yiddish literary monthly, *Sovetish Heimland*, and published translations of his poetry. Kunitz is apparently unaware that this same Vergelis, in the June, 1973 issue of his magazine, found it necessary to publish a lengthy article criticizing an earlier and milder version of Yevseyev's anti-Semitic book, *Fascism Under a Blue Star*. And the July, 1978 issue of *Sovetish Heimland* carried an extensive review of another anti-Semitic book, V. Skurlatov's *Zionism and Apartheid*.

The review, translated into Yiddish from the Russian, was by Mikhail Alexandrovich Korostovtzev, a scholar of Middle Eastern studies and director of a department at the Institute of Eastern Studies. Academician Korostovtzev writes: "The real ideological core of V. Skurlatov's book is the argument that, beginning in ancient times, from the first thousand years until our era and to the present day (p. 9) there has existed a sort of mighty, virtually an almost eternal and truly universal (or as the author says, 'transnational') economic and political power, namely the 'international Jewish corporation' or 'klan' or even 'order' (p. 11)." Although the reviewer does not brand Skurlatov's views as anti-Semitic (evidently a forbidden term), he charges that they strongly resemble those concepts in which "the

chief blame for all the anomalies' in social life, in politics and in culture, etc., rests not with the exploiting classes that are of varied ethnic composition, but rather on a single people taken as a whole, especially on the Jews."

And Academician Korostovtzev not only assails "the absolutely unscientific character" of Skurlatov's concepts, but also states that one must "struggle with him for the foundation of our world view, for the foundations of the policy of our Party in the national question." This sharp attack on a blatantly anti-Semitic work was not published in the original Russian anywhere in the USSR but only in Yiddish for a limited number of Jewish readers.

**One recalls an earlier period of anti-Semitic allusions and innuendoes in the Soviet press.** This was part of the campaign against "cosmopolitanism" some 30 years ago—a period which saw the destruction of Jewish cultural institutions and the arrest and execution of leading Jewish writers. In those days, when most of us were denying that anything was wrong and insisting that the American press reports were lies, one left-wing writer and warm friend of the Soviet Union had the courage to speak up.

In a two-part article, "The Jewish Problem in the USSR," published in the March and April, 1953 issues of *Monthly Review*, he noted that in the campaign against so-called cosmopolitanism "individuals of various nationalities were assailed, but a disproportionate emphasis seems to have been placed on alleged transgressors of Jewish nationality, especially if they functioned in non-Jewish fields. . . . To be sure, the word 'Jewish' was never mentioned.

But when the name did not reveal the transgressor's nationality parenthetical insertions of the original Jewish name did."

The author of this article describes "the anti-Semitic overtones in the campaign" as "clear and undeniable," and noted "a deliberate in-citement of anti-Jewish passion. . . ." On the other hand, the *Monthly Review* writer found "not one negative Jewish image" in Russian and Ukrainian literature of that period. "On the contrary, every Jewish character in the literature produced by non-Jews . . . has been, if anything, a little too good, too patriotic, too disciplined, too devoted to duty."

The author of this article of a quarter of a century ago was Joshua Kunitz. He did not then argue that positive characters in Soviet fiction disprove anti-Semitism in the press. But the "overtones" and oblique allusions of 30 years ago have become the raucous, crude, direct anti-Semitic incitements of today.

**How explain this shocking phenomenon in the first country of socialism?** The explanations are no simpler than those that pertain to the horrors spawned by what has been euphemistically called "the cult of personality." And in fact, the anti-Semitic obscenities are not unrelated to the deeper causes of the Stalinist infamies. The anti-Semitic heritage of Tsarist Russia and the effects of Nazi occupation during World War II provide the soil in which such poisonous weeds, if tolerated and even encouraged, will grow. More important, in my opinion: the restriction of socialist democracy, the lack of political and civil liberties, the suppression of dissent, the readiness of authoritarian rulers to use any ideological weapons, no matter

how much they contravene socialist principles, against those perceived as enemies—Israel, for example, and its suspected sympathizers—all these combine to produce the repulsive mendacities of which I have given limited examples.

There is small consolation in the fact that in our own country a great deal of scurrilous anti-Semitic propaganda is sent through the mails and over certain radio stations. Apart from the fact that the capitalist gutter should not be the model 60 years after the socialist revolution, it is painful to realize that only in the Soviet Union is anti-Semitic material disseminated by official and semi-official sources.

All this is in sharp contrast to the early years of Soviet power when, in keeping with Leninist policy, anti-Semitism was actively fought and the Soviet peoples were educated to regard it as counter-revolutionary.

With the reversal of recent years, can there be any doubt that the plethora of anti-Semitic material is a factor in causing so many Jews, most of them reared under the Soviet regime, to wish to emigrate? Nor can there be any doubt that all this does great damage to socialism and the struggle for detente, and creates obstacles to the efforts to further American-Soviet friendship.

Of course, the trees must not be mistaken for the forest. The positive significance of the Soviet Union remains. The material and cultural progress, the remarkable achievements of the formerly backward and oppressed nations of Soviet Asia, the Soviet role in the fight for peace, the assistance to national liberation struggles—all these are a big plus. But can we dismiss the cancer of anti-Semitism as non-existent or of little consequence? ■

# Birobidjan, Soviet Jews and Anti-Semitism

By SID RESNICK

*Birobidjan, Soviet Jews, Two Exhibitions* by Sam'l Aronoff, Los Angeles, 1978, published by the author. 107 pages, paperback, \$2.50.

**D**ID you know that in the Far Eastern Region of Soviet Siberia there is a Yiddish country where almost everyone speaks in Yiddish to curious American visitors? Is this a dream?

This country, of course, is supposed to be Birobidjan, the Jewish Autonomous Region in the Soviet Union, which Samuel Aronoff of Los Angeles visited in 1975 and de-

SID RESNICK of New Haven, Conn., a member of our Editorial Advisory Council, last appeared here in Feb., 1975 with an article, "Is Israel a Racist State?" (reprinted in our *Third Reader*, A Ten Year Harvest, 300 pages, paperback, \$3.75. He is also a regular contributor to the English pages of the *Morgn Freiheit*.)

scribed in his 107-page book, *Birobidjan, Soviet Jews, Two Exhibitions*. Its style, though not its occasional patches of odd English, reminds one of similar books in the 1930s, whose authors saw nothing amiss or questionable even though the Stalinist purges and repressions hung heavy over the land. Naturally, therefore, the book was hailed in *Moskovskaya Pravda* July 15, 1978 by one I. Ablamov in a review boldly entitled "Facts Against Lies."

How many Jews live in this idyllic Yiddish country? Are there 50,000—100,000—500,000? Mr. Aronoff cites an excerpt of an undated article by Albert Axelrod of the London *Jewish Chronicle* Foreign Service which states: "The entire Jewish Autonomous Region including (the city of) Birobidjan has approximately 185,000 citizens. Of this total, perhaps 25,000 are Jews." Why "perhaps"?

The Soviet census of 1969 records that the entire population of Birobidjan was 172,449 and of these only 11,452 were Jews—or less than 7%. This was a decline from the census of 1959, which recorded a Jewish population of 14,269 or 8.8%. In the face of a declining Jewish population in Birobidjan the figure of 25,000 appears highly dubious.

Now if the Jews in Birobidjan constitute as little as 7 or 8% of the whole population, what is the justification for calling this a Jewish Autonomous Region at all?

**What about its educational system?** Mr. Aronoff writes that the "Jewish Autonomous Region has fully adequate school facilities that include: nurseries, elementary and secondary (high) schools and certain trade and agricultural institutes." Are any of these schools con-

ducted in Yiddish? Do the Russian language schools in the Jewish Autonomous Region offer courses in Yiddish or on Jewish subjects to those of their Jewish students who apply for them? Mr. Aronoff is reticent.

The author tells us that he visited a collective farm (kolkhoz) called "Behest of Lenin," which he strangely terms "a national Jewish enterprise." Its school has "approximately 300 children of which 100 are Jewish children," and he comments that "this little schoolhouse can sure be used as a model for any school—anywhere" (p. 16). Is Yiddish taught to the 100 Jewish children of this school? No! In the Jewish Autonomous Region there are no schools at all that teach Yiddish!

This fact is confirmed in the author's interview with Lev Shapiro, the First Secretary of the Communist Party in Birobidjan: "He (Shapiro) noted, however, that a request had come from a group of 17 Jewish youth to provide a class in Yiddish in Birobidjan. This request will positively be met soon; it may lead to an expansion of this program, and undoubtedly, will include associated subjects" (p. 11).

Since these 17 Jewish youth made this request four years have gone by and nothing was done to provide that Yiddish class or to "include associated subjects."

Mr. Aronoff also reports that there is a Yiddish radio program in Birobidjan and "a fine Jewish drama theatre performing in Yiddish" and a "substantial" Yiddish section in the local Sholem Aleichem Library.

There are also two newspapers in Birobidjan, one in Russian, the other in Yiddish: Both are called *Birobidjan Star*. Mr. Aronoff met the editor, apparently a Jew, of what he de-

scribed as "the Russian version of the *Birobidjaner Shtern*."

**Having subscribed to the *Birobidjaner Shtern*** a few years ago, I would say that it is the Yiddish version of the local Russian newspaper. This is a good newspaper if one wants to find out how much cement or how many machine parts or stockings are produced in the local factories or what the scores are of the local athletic teams, but one will find little in it about Jewish affairs, Yiddish literature or education. *Birobidjaner Shtern* definitely does not agitate for Yiddish schools in Birobidjan, it never calls for courses in Yiddish literature or Jewish history, even in Russian, in Birobidjan, it never urges Soviet Jews or other Jews to emigrate to Birobidjan, and it never challenges or refutes the slanders of the anti-Semitic writers in the Soviet Union.

Instead *Birobidjaner Shtern* reprints in Yiddish the scribblings of the anti-Zionist propagandists in the Soviet Union, almost all of whom are also anti-Semites. Thus, *Birobidjaner Shtern* of Dec. 27, 1972 carried a gushingly favorable review by a Novosti Agency writer of V. Bolshakov's book, *Zionism in the Service of Anti-Communism*, which repeats such fables as: "Zionism aided McCarthyism and had close connections with the Birchites and the Minutemen and other reactionaries." Apparently the writer never took the trouble to learn that Albert Einstein and many American rabbis and liberal Jewish politicians who were either Zionists or Zionist sympathizers were also opponents of McCarthyism and never had any connections with Birchites, let alone Minutemen.

Another example: In Nov. and Dec., 1974, when the American Jew-



ish community and a few American left publications were protesting the anti-Semitic charges by the late U.S. Gen. George S. Brown that the Jews own the banks and the newspapers in this country, *Birobidjaner Shtern* took another tack. Dec. 14, 1974 it carried an article by the Novosti Agency writer K. Maslov under the headline, "What Gen. Brown Said and Why the Zionists Are Angry at Him." Maslov wrote, "Gen. Brown was right when he spoke of the strong hand of the Zionists in the United States." All that Maslov did in that article was to substitute the word "Zionists" for the word "Jews" that Gen. Brown had used, thus covering up his anti-Semitism.

Mr. Aronoff makes it appear that Birobidjan is teeming with Jews. After visiting a factory that employs 3,000 people he writes: "A great proportion of the employees are Jewish, although the plant does not keep records of nationality." If there are really less than 15,000 Jews in Birobidjan, or even the inflated figure of 25,000 Jews given in this book, the proportion of Jews in any enterprise in this Region is likely to be quite small.

Such deceptiveness about the Jewish character of Birobidjan is standard fare with Soviet apologists on this subject. A typical recent example was the news story in the *N. Y. Daily World* Jan. 30, 1979 which in passing mentioned "Birobidjan, where Yiddish is the primary language." In an area where more than 90% of the population is not even Jewish and where Jewish children have no schools or courses where they could learn their people's language such an assertion is nonsense.

Why this continual straining to exaggerate the Jewishness of this

area which has such a small number of Jews and plays a peripheral role in the Jewish life in the Soviet Union?

It is this reviewer's opinion that the Soviet government exaggerates the Jewishness of Birobidjan in order to deflect criticism that the government is soft on the anti-Semites and restricts the nationality group rights of the Soviet Jews in matters of Yiddish language cultural activity. A more "Jewish" Birobidjan also serves as a propaganda counterweight against the State of Israel. Another reason for this exaggeration is to conceal the fact that from the original Soviet point of view Birobidjan is a complete failure.

*Odd as it may seem today, the Soviet leadership selected Birobidjan 45 years ago to develop it as the secure base for the Soviet Jewish nationality and for Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union!*

The position of the Soviet government, which proclaimed Birobidjan as a Jewish Autonomous Region in 1934, was best formulated by the then president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Kalinin, a Russian who was especially concerned with Jewish problems. Kalinin told a meeting in Moscow on May 28, 1934:

"You ask, why was the Jewish Autonomous Region organized? . . . The main reason is that there are many Jews among us and they do not have a state structure of their own. This is the only nationality in the Soviet Union which has a population of three million and has no state structure. I consider that the creation of such a Region is in our conditions the only means for the normal development of this nationality. I reckon that in about 10 years Birobidjan will become the

most important, if not the only guardian of the Yiddish socialist national culture. . . .

"In the Autonomous Region of Birobidjan there will develop a great socialist construction and at the same time also a genuine Socialist Yiddish culture and those who value such a Yiddish national culture, who will want to lend a hand to the development of the Jewish Region and its socialist national culture should connect themselves with Birobidjan and assist it. I think that the Jews will be able to maintain themselves (as a group) in their own national region longer than anywhere else" (*Yidn in Sovetn Farband*, Moscow, 1935, pages 32, 33).

Today, when the official ideological stress in the Soviet Union is on assimilation and hence the disappearance of the Jews as a distinct ethnic group, it is startling to realize how different the official policy on this question was 45 years ago. Kalinin's sentiments are now deemed extremely "nationalistic" in those same quarters and they are no longer even mentioned.

It is apparent from the small number of Jews in Birobidjan today and from the fact that not only is there no developed Yiddish culture, but that young Jewish students have to plead for a class in the Yiddish language that Kalinin's bold and generous vision of Birobidjan as the future "guardian of the Yiddish socialist national culture" has turned into a shambles.

Despite Kalinin's agitation for Birobidjan, the Soviet government never undertook a campaign to inspire Soviet Jews to settle on a mass scale in Birobidjan, to go there to build a Jewish socialist country. What the Soviet government seemingly granted with one hand it took

away with the other when it succumbed to the fear that this project smacked of what it wrongly regarded as "nationalism" and the bias in favor of assimilation took the upper hand. In addition, the Stalinist repressions and purges in the 1930s hit Birobidjan particularly hard. Many of the assigned Jewish leaders of Birobidjan were arrested and executed on false charges of espionage. As a result Birobidjan became an unsafe place, a place for Jews to stay away from.

It is a pity that political considerations far removed from Birobidjan wrecked Mikhail Kalinin's vision of 1934, a vision enthusiastically welcomed by the Jewish left movements at the time that helped produce an enormous pro-Soviet feeling among Jews generally. However, it is quite wrong for anyone today to sustain the fiction that this vision is now a reality in Birobidjan, and this has nothing to do with the pleasant material conditions there which Mr. Aronoff noted. The title Jewish Autonomous Region for Birobidjan is, regrettably, a misnomer.

*The next chapter of Mr. Aronoff's book deals with the question of anti-Semitism and the reasons why Jews are emigrating from the Soviet Union. He quotes approvingly a statement by a Soviet official and professor who assured him "that there is no anti-Semitism and no 'Jewish problem' in the Soviet Union," nor is there any "discrimination" against Jews (p. 83).*

Information of complaints by Soviet Jews who have encountered discrimination in admissions to universities or to professional institutions, or who have met with discrimination in advancement in their jobs are never publicized in the Soviet

press and one learns of such things only from the persons who were aggrieved or their relatives. When one hears of so many examples of such discriminations from Soviet Jews themselves as they are reported by American Jews (including progressive Jews) who have visited their families in the Soviet Union or from Russian Jewish immigrants here, including some who are not generally hostile to the Soviet regime, they can no longer simply be dismissed even if exact statistical data will never be available. One would surely have to be naive today to assume that an exaggerated politicized concern with "security" by certain authorities, or simple anti-Semitic prejudice or suspicion, or a combination of both, had not already led to many cases of discrimination against Jews in various Soviet institutions.

Such discrimination is not unprecedented in Soviet practice. During World War II the Soviet government deprived certain nationalities in their entirety of all their rights and their territory, such as the Volga Germans the Crimean Tartars, the Kalmyks and certain North Caucasian peoples. The Arab-Israel conflict has become such an envenomed subject to the Soviet authorities that it is not inconceivable that Jews in general would be subject to various suspicions which in turn result in discrimination against Jews. It is also likely that such discrimination affecting Jews who may or may not have any interest in Jewish life or Israel would create greater alienation among Soviet Jews.

**However, a more realistic indicator of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union is the persistence in the past 10 years or so of anti-Semitic**

literature in the form of books and newspaper and magazine articles that are clearly anti-Jewish and which are not refuted in the general Soviet media or by responsible authorities. Though Mr. Aronoff does not mention this literature at all it is noteworthy that in 1975 a specific anti-Semitic article was the subject of a public protest by the organization of which Mr. Aronoff was a principal officer, namely, the Jewish Cultural Clubs of Los Angeles. The leadership of this progressive organization issued a statement on an article by Dimitri Zhukov entitled, "The Ideology and Practice of Brutality," published in a leading Soviet weekly paper, *Ogonyok*, Oct. 12, 1974. The Los Angeles statement declared: "We express our revulsion at Zhukov's article. . . . We are deeply offended by Zhukov's anti-Semitic libels" (translated from Yiddish).

**Even the Moscow Yiddish monthly, *Sovetish Heimland*, itself criticized a few such "anti-Zionist" dissertations. In June, 1973 the *Sovetish Heimland* editor, Aaron Vergelis, published an article with the meaningful headline, "Not Only Ignorance," which denounced the pamphlet, *Fascism Under the Blue Star*, by Yevgeny Yevseyev and charged that "such pamphlets mislead the reader and distort the essence of the problem"; in Jan., 1974 Vergelis cited three popular "anti-Zionist" authors, V. Begun, T. Kichko and Y. Yevseyev (again) who had denigrated the Yiddish language and culture and charged them with being "deaf to what Lenin actually said" on this subject and with quoting Lenin incorrectly in their writings on the Jews; in July, 1978 *Sovetish Heimland* published the trans-**

lation in Yiddish of a strong critique by Academician M. A. Korostovtzev of V. Skurlatov's book, *Zionism and Apartheid*, a crassly anti-Semitic book couched in scholarly language (English translation in *Morgn Freiheit*, Oct. 15 and 22, 1978). This vicious book attributes the origin of modern racism to the Jewish religion, claims that the Jews were from ancient times a "transnational corporation" and "that in all epochs of the development of mankind the Jews fulfilled purely parasitical functions," that the Jews promoted capitalism and imperialism and "The representatives of the international Zionist capital, clinging to (the concept of) the 'chosen people,' openly aspire to world domination."

**To be sure, *Sovetish Heimland*'s all too occasional critiques of such anti-Semitic literature are always made in Yiddish—never in Russian for the benefit of the huge Russian reading public—and are never as forthright as they ought to be. However, if anyone has any doubt as to the sick situation of this entire problem the following may be instructive. Since Sept. 1977 *Sovetish Heimland* has printed six or seven page resumés or summaries in both Russian and English for non-Yiddish readers that give synopses of the noteworthy items, whether short stories, articles, poems or editorial comments published in its Yiddish pages. Yet, the English and Russian language resumés in July, 1978 carried no mention whatever of the critique of V. Skurlatov's book, *Zionism and Apartheid*, though items of much less importance were summarized in these languages!**

In order to "prove" that anti-Semitism is not one of the reasons that prompt Soviet Jews to emigrate Mr. Aronoff cites examples of the

most negative types of Jews who did leave, particularly of people who were looking to get rich quick abroad.

In one instance a doctor in a Soviet city told him that when he had graduated from medical school "two of his friends (Jewish) immediately applied for emigration to Israel. He could not discover a logical reason for their action. Neither could speak, read or write Yiddish. They had never indicated an interest in anything Yiddish. Baffled, the doctor speculated maybe they thought they can benefit better financially." A year later these two doctors asked their friend to help them return to the Soviet Union. "They were just fools (*duraki*), commented the doctor" (p. 66). Here it is Jews after money who didn't succeed.

Mr. Aronoff was frequently told that many of the Soviet Jews who left for Israel or other countries fell upon hard times and wanted to return to the Soviet Union. Yet, 50,000 Soviet Jews are expected to emigrate this year! I know of former Soviet Jews who regularly speak by phone to their relatives in the Soviet Union. Presumably if things are so bad here they would tell this to their relatives and so spare them any bad experiences. Most Soviet Jews by now surely know what awaits them outside their country. Why a considerable number of Soviet Jews still want to emigrate despite their knowledge of expected difficulties abroad is a question Mr. Aronoff avoids.

This reviewer shares the view that the great majority of Soviet Jews do not want to leave their homeland—despite the problems with which they have to contend—and, indeed they shouldn't. Jews have made important contributions to the defense

and construction of the Soviet state and to all aspects of Soviet society. They should be able to enjoy a secure future as one of the many nationalities in their homeland. At the same time, those Soviet Jews who see no future for themselves or their children as Jews in the Soviet Union and want to emigrate ought to be allowed to do so.

Mr. Aronoff's arguments that the Jews who left the Soviet Union did so for reasons that were not "logical" or that they were not "mature" or were just cranks or speculators looking for an easy life in the capitalist West sound too politically biased, if not anti-Semitic, to be taken seriously.

A more perceptive view of this troubling situation was taken by Haim Suller, managing editor of the *Morgn Freiheit* of New York, who reported upon his return from a visit to the Soviet Union in Sept., 1978: "Jews are leaving the Soviet Union because they feel they are more and more losing the gains of the Revolution. The percentage of Jewish students in the higher educational institutions has been diminishing in

recent years. According to reports of new arrivals and of tourists in the Soviet Union it is becoming more difficult for Jews to enter higher educational institutions or to receive advancement in the enterprises where they work. In the period of World War II many Jews earned higher military ranks. The old Jewish generals are gradually dying out; new high ranking Jewish officers, according to all reports, are no longer assigned. There are no longer any important Jewish diplomats or important Jewish leaders in the Communist Party, even if here or there one still finds Jews in important positions, such as Venyamin Dimshitz, who is a minister, and others" (*Morgn Freiheit*, Oct. 1, 1978).

The Soviet Jewish question does not fit into other familiar categories in Jewish history. Nevertheless, it has turned out to be more disturbing and vexatious than many of us could have imagined 10 or 20 years ago, let alone longer. Mr. Aronoff's booklet repeats the pleasant and official assurances that have been heard many times before, but they now are simply unacceptable. ■

Note: Nine months after this article was originally published, the March, 1980 issue of *Sovetish Heimland* reported for the first time that courses in Yiddish language instruction had begun in 1979 in three high schools in Birobidjan.

# STALIN DISSECTED

## His Historic Role and Anti-Socialist Crimes

By MAX GORDON

**J**OSEPH STALIN was born in Gori, Georgia, Dec. 21, 1879, just 100 years ago. Few individuals have had so massive an impact on the course of history.

In my view, the overall impact has been tragic. But this, as well as other complex questions concerning Stalin's seemingly contradictory role, continue to be debated among both socialist revolutionaries and academic scholars. For while his monstrous crimes have been disastrous for socialism, during the years of his rule the USSR emerged as a great power, the economy was socialized, the fascists' bid for world domination was crushed and the stage set for great Soviet technological advances. Whether and to what extent Stalin's leadership contributed to these achievements, or whether they were accomplished despite him, is a matter of much controversy and is perhaps a judgment that can never be rendered,

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since there is no way to determine what would have happened without him.

But, as described below, the record is clear that economically, politically, socially and morally Soviet socialism was profoundly hampered and distorted by Stalinism.

*To pose a few of the complex* questions about Stalin's role: What was the actual extent of Stalin's crimes? Does the phenomenon known as Stalinism embrace only the crimes? Were these crimes, or Stalinism, a necessary accompaniment to socialist construction in the USSR? How could the phenomenon have arisen in the USSR, and how did it gain Communist Party and popular acceptance? Was Stalinism responsible for the USSR's victory over Nazi Germany and what was Stalin's contribution? Was Stalinism a necessary or inevitable outgrowth of the system of proletarian dictatorship constructed under Lenin's leadership? What have been the consequences of Stalinism for the USSR, and for world socialism? How enduring are these consequences?

The literature on Stalin is, of course, enormous. My discussion here relies most heavily on the carefully documented studies of two Marxist-Communist-scholars, both

dissidents, and the personal memoirs of two former Communists who, after dedicated service in behalf of the USSR, suffered 10 years each in the Gulag, the prison labor camps. The studies are Roy Medvedev's *Let History Judge*, completed in 1968, published by Knopf, 1971; and Jean Elleinstein's *The Stalin Phenomenon*, initially published in France in 1975 and in England by the left wing publishers, Lawrence and Wishart, in 1976. Medvedev, a historian, was expelled from the Soviet Communist Party after he wrote the book, which is based on the many Soviet publications, records, documents, memoirs and first-hand testimony that followed the revelations of the 20th and 22nd Soviet Party Congresses in 1956 and 1961; unpublished in the USSR, it initially circulated as *samizdat* literature. Elleinstein, a leading French Communist intellectual, is critical of his Party's leadership for the slow pace of destalinization. The two personal memoirs are Leopold Trepper's *Great Game* (McGraw-Hill, 1977), an autobiographical account by the organizer of the USSR's leading anti-Nazi espionage ring in Western Europe (the "Red Orchestra"); and Lev Kopelev's *To Be Preserved Forever* (Lippincott, 1977), the work of a leading Soviet dissident, most recently expelled from the Party in 1968, still, like Medvedev, living and active in Moscow.

**Stalinism has come to mean an explicit historic phenomenon, a malformation with essential features distinct from those of the formative years of the Soviet state and world communist movement; it cannot be equated with socialism any more than fascism can be equated with capitalism. Medvedev defines it as a**

personal despotism, sustained by mass terror and worship of the despot (or the cult of the individual). The record reveals that the mass terror, Stalin's crimes, was even more extensive, more incredibly evil, than exposed by Soviet leaders at the 20th and 22nd Party Congresses. Khrushchev and his associates were concerned primarily with the crude frameups of masses of Communist leaders and members, and with the damage to the nation as a whole. They did not deal with the cruelties visited on non-communists, such as the peasantry—poorer peasants as well as kulaks—in the early 1930s. Even within the limits of his concern, the facts are worse than Khrushchev reported.

Yet Stalinism encompasses other things as well. It profoundly influenced the method of governing party and state; the party's, and the world movement's, ideological and methodological outlook; Soviet natural and social sciences; its art, literature, psychology, ethics; the relationship between workers and peasants, and of both to the operations of the economy; the treatment of national minorities including the Jews; and Stalinism did incalculable damage to the world's perception of socialism. As Kopelev puts it, only after years in prison camps for having protested Red Army raping, looting and killing of German civilians during the advance into Germany, was he able to free himself gradually from the "sticky web of dialectical sophistry and syllogism" which was Stalin's hallmark and which could "transform the best of men into villains and executioners."

To deal with some specifics. In the early years after the Revolution, debates among Bolshevik leaders were sharp, animated, frank and free.

Policies were arrived at through controversy. The clash of opinion, Trepper recalls, "gave the Party its cohesion and vitality." Lenin was often outvoted in leading Party bodies, and the idea of penalizing someone for opposing him was inconceivable. The concept that debate cease after a decision was taken did not exist. When in 1921 the Revolution was threatened by White armies on all sides and by mass starvation and the 10th Party Congress banned factions as a temporary measure, it initiated a free-wheeling discussion bulletin for expression of opposition opinion.

Under Stalin anyone with a differing opinion, even if loyal, was a political *criminal*, a "deviationist objectively in the service of the enemy." As early as 1925 Stalin was charged with using his position as the Party's General Secretary to assign critics to posts far from Moscow. At the 14th Party Congress that year Lenin's widow, Krupskaya, assailed the emerging Stalin pattern of removing opposition members from important party posts and of demanding public renunciation of opposing views once a decision is taken. From 1929, when Stalin gained almost total power over the party machine, even Old Bolsheviks dared not oppose, or even discuss, his decisions.

Trepper recalls that you spoke "only to your trusted friends, and even then with trepidation. With everyone else you recited the official litanies from *Pravda*." Even the forms of party leadership were abandoned. Until 1927 Party congresses were held yearly or every two years. In the ensuing quarter century, just three congresses were held; there were few plenary Central Committee sessions, and even

the political bureau rarely met after Stalin had seized full power. Collective rule had given way to a single dictator who ruled by fiat.

Though Stalin is long gone and party rule has been largely restored at the top, a neo-Stalinist tendency that demands blind discipline and unquestioning submission to leadership persists in the USSR and in some communist movements abroad.

**A second specific Stalinist feature:** Lenin and the Bolsheviks considered dictatorship against the former ruling classes as essential to the preservation of the Revolution. Their violence was directed against counterrevolutionary forces warring against the regime. When in 1920-21 the desperate economic and military situation led some erstwhile supporters to revolt, the regime did suppress these revolts. But Lenin insisted upon the exceptional nature of the measures taken and demanded otherwise "unwavering adherence" to the rule of law.

Stalin's practice was to consider the proletarian dictatorship as force uninhibited by law and that this applied to the entire transition period from capitalism to communism. The concept of revolutionary legality was contemptuously cast aside as "rotten liberalism," and rampant lawlessness became the hallmark of the dictatorship despite the camouflage of the 1936 "Stalin Constitution."

Third, until 1921 Mensheviks and Left Social Revolutionaries were represented in the Soviets. Leninist theory did not envisage a one-party state. These parties were banned in 1921 after they participated in uprisings against the regime. In 1923, after Lenin was removed from the scene by illness, the 12th Party Congress decreed that the dictatorship

of the proletariat could be exercised only through the dictatorship of the Communist Party. Whatever Stalin's role in this decision, in the ensuing years he precluded all reexamination of the monolithic party issue. In typically syllogistic fashion, he proclaimed that since parties reflect classes and there was now one class in the USSR, there was no need for more than one party.

Fourth, Lenin was profoundly troubled by the perils of bureaucracy that he saw developing. Thus, he fought for independent trade unions as essential for the protection of workers' interests against the "bureaucratic distortions" of the workers' state. Under Stalin, bureaucracy, unchecked, ran rampant. Unions were reduced to handling nonessential individual problems.

**Fifth, Lenin considered anti-Semitism, and all forms of racism and chauvinism, counterrevolutionary and to be relentlessly fought.** Stalin treated minority peoples in the USSR brutally. He became increasingly anti-Semitic, and in his final years was uninhibitedly so.

Sixth, Lenin repeatedly admitted error. He recognized that in the light of the USSR's pioneering socialist role, its cultural backwardness, the inexperience of its leaders and its struggle for survival, mistakes were inevitable and needed serious collective study for their lessons.

Stalin, by stifling debate and suppressing consideration of alternative approaches to his own mechanistic solutions, enhanced error. But no one could point out his mistakes, much less undertake to learn from them.

Finally, Lenin recognized that the Revolution had to surmount sec-

ularism, a widespread and dangerous disease of socialist movements. He welcomed the support of former anti-Bolsheviks, other parties and their members, former Tsarist military and civilian officials and bourgeois specialists, provided they refrained from counterrevolutionary activity.

In sharp contrast, Stalin was suspicious of, and hostile toward, all these elements. Whereas Lenin carried through the rule that political leaders not interfere with military specialists during the Civil War, Stalin had to be removed as a political commissar on the Southern Front for such repeated, and costly, interference. Later he was to persecute bourgeois specialists, as well as former Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary leaders who had long accepted the Revolution. The tendency to characterize as an enemy all who do not see eye-to-eye with the party became widespread in the communist movement and persists in some places.

**Stalin, a Bolshevik leader but by no means preeminent in 1922, became the CPSU's General Secretary early that year.** Newly-created, the post was viewed as an administrative one and Stalin was expected to bring some order into party organization. But this included cadre assignment and Stalin made shrewd use of this power to advance his personal position, while weakening those he considered rivals or opponents. The sharp divisions in the leadership following Lenin's death facilitated his power moves.

Lenin, in his last year, had several run-ins with Stalin and strongly criticized him on several specific grounds. Ironically, in the light of Stalin's later reputation as the Len-

inist expert on the national question, some of the sharpest critiques involved serious charges of "great Russian" arrogance on Stalin's part, despite his Georgian origin.

Ironically, too, Lenin declared a failure the Workers and Peasants Inspection, an agency under Stalin's charge designed to control bureaucracy, on the grounds that it had itself become a huge, badly-organized bureaucracy. Late in 1922 Lenin warned, from his sickbed, that Stalin had accumulated too much power. In a series of "testaments" to the 12th Party Congress set for March, 1923, he again warned against Stalin and urged his removal from the General Secretaryship. He placed the testaments in sealed envelopes labeled for opening in case of his death. His intent was to present them personally otherwise. During the Congress, however, he was alive but in a coma. The Congress thus did not learn of the testaments. By the next Congress in 1924, which knew of them, Stalin was able to exploit the struggle for leadership between Zinoviev and Trotsky to consolidate his position.

**Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1921 to replace the primitive "War Communism" of Civil War days, permitted the country to recover from the terrible famine and devastation brought by seven years of imperialist and civil wars.** With industry virtually wiped out and agriculture producing less than half of 1913, Lenin knew that socialization required a certain level of production attainable only under conditions of private ownership of at least small business and farms. NEP, in his view, would need to function for a few decades, with socialization

to take place gradually through persuasion and incentives, not administratively by force.

From 1923 to 1928 productive forces developed with some rapidity. While kulaks and middle peasants, small industrialists and merchants prospered particularly, the Bolshevik state controlled large industry, finance, transport and foreign trade, as well as the state apparatus. The Trotsky-led opposition pressed for rapid industrialization through intensified exploitation of the peasantry, but Bukharin and Stalin had the support of the bulk of the party in defeating this. As Medvedev observes, Stalin's later crimes did not mean that he was always wrong or that all struggles in the 1920s were simply power struggles; genuine issues of socialist construction were involved.

But the outcome permitted Stalin to oust from key positions or expel from the party large numbers of the Trotskyist opposition. He was able to gain support for this because the basic policies he upheld against the opposition—the need to "build socialism in one country" and maintenance of the alliance under NEP of workers and peasants—were widely backed by party leaders and membership. But his measures against the opposition meant the destruction of inner-party democracy, even in the top leadership. These measures led later to physical destruction of party opponents.

**In 1927 a poor harvest resulted** in a huge shortfall in grain collection. A crisis threatened and the 15th Party Congress in December agreed to a temporary increase in requisitions, amid strictures against harsh collections measures. But immediately after the Congress Stalin

sent instructions throughout the party for ruthless, forced requisitions and suppression of all opposition. He then proceeded to put over a program of rapid, forced, industrialization and forced collectivization. Bukharin and other Bolshevik leaders opposed Stalin on the grounds that his program threatened the workers' and peasants' alliance, would alienate the middle peasants who comprised the peasant majority, and would require massive terror against the people and the party. They argued, too, that the material base and trained personnel for effective collectivization and rapid industrialization were as yet inadequate. Experience tragically proved them right.

Bukharin also feared Stalin's political direction. He foresaw that Stalin's thesis of heightened class conflict as industry and collectivization advanced would mean mass repression, and he protested against the replacement of collective party leadership with Stalin's personal leadership. Privately, he predicted that Stalin's course would lead to a blood purge, that Stalin would "subordinate everything to his lust for power," and that "he knew only vengeance and the stab in the back. . . ."

**Thus at least some top Bolsheviks** were aware of the direction Stalin was taking before 1930 but were powerless to stop him. He had gained the support of the former opposition since he had taken over—in exaggerated form—their policy of rapid industrialization. By attacking his opponents, including Bukharin, as siding with the kulaks and capitalists against socialism and industrialization, he isolated and destroyed them.

He also collided with Bukharin, who headed the Communist International, over the speed of development of the world economic crisis and its political effects. Stalin, operating through the Soviet delegation to the Comintern, led it to adopt a program based on expectation of imminent world revolution, thereby making Social Democracy and reformist trade unions—"social fascism"—the main enemy, since in his sectarian concept they were the main obstacles to communist-led revolution. Bukharin, more sensitive to the fascist danger, was removed from the Comintern in 1929.

After they were already in motion the CP's Central Committee approved Stalin's plans for moving against the kulaks, speeding industrialization and collectivization, and imposing central planning early in 1929. Whereas there had been undemocratic and repressive practices earlier, what occurred afterwards was so vastly different in scale as to represent a qualitatively different social phenomenon. It was neither foreordained nor an inevitable consequence of Leninist policy. Bukharin's position certainly reflected Lenin's program far more accurately and was a possible alternative.

**The initial collectivization target** was 8,000,000 hectares under cultivation in 1930. Stalin, without consultation, upped it to 30,000,000. By the end of 1929 kulaks were being deported *en masse*, armed struggles were developing, party officials were assassination targets and thousands were arrested for attacking these officials.

Stalin launched the slogan of "liquidation of the kulaks as a class," but since the definition of kulak was

vague, many middle peasants were included in the subsequent wave of deportations. Panic-stricken peasants killed their stock, farm work was partially paralyzed as millions were forced into collectives and the countryside was in chaos.

By 1933 over 15,000,000 households had been collectivized, as kulak liquidation continued. But livestock numbered no more than half that of 1929; the harvests of 1931 and 1932 were disasters, and the USSR stood on the brink of famine in the winter of 1932-33. Large numbers did die of starvation in some areas, many died while being transported and many were executed. Cholera and typhus epidemics carried off many thousands more.

Trepper, recounting some of the terrible hardships suffered by deported peasants, reports that according to rumor the collectivization drive cost about 5,000,000 lives. Unprepared for collectivization, materially and ideologically, Soviet agriculture has never fully recovered.

**Stalin also upped industrialization targets** unilaterally and arbitrarily after careful plans had been worked out. This upset balances and resulted in enormous waste. Buildings were constructed but could not be equipped; machines were built that could not be used for lack of raw materials, etc. While the first five-year plan was an achievement, it was far short of goals, though this was not reported at the time.

Meanwhile, the cult of personality was assiduously being developed with millions of small busts, pictures, encomiums of every kind. A Russian tradition of the "Little Father" was

intensively exploited, but the cult's spread did not stop at Soviet borders; it became a phenomenon of the international communist movement and bred little cults in other parties, as in local parties in the USSR.

Though Stalin had enormous power, he had still not eliminated all possibility of challenge to his control of the party apparatus. A few Politburo members retained some independence and would have removed him if they could. A handful of leaders was expelled from the party in the early 1930s for private discussion of plans for his removal and reestablishment of collective party leadership. Stalin wanted a public trial and execution, but the Politburo refused. In late 1932 and 1933 Stalin also staged trials of party leaders of the Ukrainian, Armenian and Central Asian republics, as well as many university people, charging them with bourgeois nationalism; apparently they had resisted his centralizing tendencies. The forced labor camps and zones were filling up with hundreds of thousands of prisoners.

**At the 17th Congress in 1934,** Stalin appeared in supreme control. Extolled extravagantly by all speakers including former opponents, his policies were unanimously approved and he was given a blank check. Despite this apparent subservience, 1,108 of the 1,966 delegates were later executed, including 98 of the 139 elected to the Central Committee and at least five of the 15 members of the presidium (two others died mysteriously).

Why? Later records suggest substantial underlying opposition to Stalin's policy of terror and a desire to replace him with Kirov, Leningrad party chief who delivered the

Politburo report to the Congress. Stalin's enormous popular prestige probably precluded this. In the elections for the Central Committee, Kirov's name was crossed out by only three delegates; Stalin's, by 270. He received the lowest vote, but this was not told to the Congress.

Several former opposition leaders were elected to the Central Committee and changes in party rules placed strong emphasis on inner-party democracy, sharply restricting the powers of the General Secretary. Elleinstein observes that the Congress' outcome appeared to have been a compromise in a struggle between Stalin and the Party.

Soon after the Congress, Kirov was assassinated. Khrushchev later suggested Stalin's responsibility, and both Medvedev and Elleinstein indicate NKVD culpability. NKVD Commissar Yagoda, himself on trial in 1938, declared he had instigated the assassination. Though he named others as having ordered it, he could not have accepted such an order from anyone but Stalin.

In any case, Stalin seized the occasion to launch the terrible blood purge of 1936-38. Medvedev estimates, and others accept this, that some 5,000,000 were sentenced to prisons and labor camps, and 400,000 to 500,000 executed. Long before it was over, Stalin had eliminated all potential critics and opponents; he had established absolute control over the party with the NKVD as his tool. His own people, thoroughly committed to him personally, occupied all key posts throughout the party and NKVD.

**A few public trials of prominent Old Bolsheviks** were staged during the purge period. Absurd confessions were wrung from them by a com-

bination of physical torture and psychological pressures. Both Trepper and Kopelev, who were later subjected to the process, describe it in graphic detail, as have many hundreds of accounts by victims published in the USSR after 1956. The public was thus confronted with the signed confessions of veteran revolutionaries, long known as Bolshevik stalwarts, that they had been agents of the enemy. What else could the public believe? Kopelev writes that he for one never believed then that Trotsky or Bukharin were Gestapo agents and he did not think Stalin believed it. But he regarded the purge trials as an expression of some far-sighted policy designed to discredit all political opposition. A besieged fortress, the USSR could permit no vacillation or doubt; but since inner-party differences were too complex for the masses, the opposition had to be so discredited as to be hated by the people.

In fact, the purge massively weakened the USSR. Victims included party secretaries at all levels down to the lowest, masses of leading technologists, educators, scientists, diplomats, historians, mathematicians, philosophers, writers and artists, almost the entire Komsomol leadership, party leaders of the trade unions and nearly all the Autonomous Republics. Trepper notes that thousands of communists perished before firing squads singing the Internationale and shouting their faith in the Revolution.

**The Red Army was decimated.** Three marshals out of the military's five—including Marshal Tukhachevsky, head of the armed forces—13 of 15 army commanders, 57 out of 85 corps commanders, 110 out of 195 divisional commanders and tens of

thousands of lesser officers were executed or deported to labor camps. Nuremberg Trial testimony and information gathered by Trepper indicated that Hitler's decision to attack when he did was motivated by his determination not to give the the USSR a chance to train a new officer corps.

The chief of military intelligence was summoned, with other officers, from the Spanish battle front and executed. Trepper's highly effective espionage network in Western Europe, including Berlin, suffered because of the inexperience of the men who replaced the executed General Berzin. The military, Trepper maintains, was decimated because it was the last organized force independent of Stalin's will.

**The mass repression heavily affected foreign Communist parties and leaders caught in Moscow.** The Polish Party was disbanded in 1938 and its leadership executed. The same fate befell the three Baltic parties (before absorption into the USSR), and leading members of the Yugoslav, Bulgarian, Korean, Chinese, Iranian and Indian CPs. Bela Kun, legendary leader of the 1918 Hungarian Revolution and a top Comintern figure, perished, as did several German and Italian Communists who were refugees in Moscow.

The Palestinian Party leadership (then all Jewish), sent to Kiev University to study, was destroyed; one survived after 21 years in the Gulag. Several leaders of the Biro-Bidzhan party were destroyed, and the Jewish institutions they had developed were dismantled.

Not only the principals were victims of the repression. In many cases their families, including grown chil-

dren, were affected. At the 22nd Congress in 1961, it was charged that Stalin, abetted by Molotov and Kaganovich, was responsible for these terrible massacres. Elleinstein observes, however, that it is hard to imagine that other Politburo members — Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Zhdanov, etc.—were unaware of what was happening and thus share some of the responsibility. The implication is that the country as a whole may have been unaware of it. A few public trials were held of top leaders, but the vast majority were either tried secretly or not at all and no reports of their arrest appeared in the media. Disappearances were simply reported as removals or replacements.

The destruction of the Red Army's trained cadres was in effect, only one service Stalin rendered Hitler. Resistance to the Nazis' seizure of power in 1933 had been greatly weakened by the sectarian policies imposed on the Comintern in relation to Social Democracy. The Popular Front tactic, advanced initially by the French, Spanish and U.S. parties, was adopted by the Comintern in 1935 only after a year's internal struggle, capped by Dimitrov's joining it after his release from a Nazi jail. Stalin evidently held back.

**The Nazi-Soviet Non-aggression Pact** was doubtless justified by the obvious intent of the West to push Hitler into war with the USSR. Not justified, however, were the secret clauses on territorial changes at the expense of Poland, Romania, the Baltic states and Finland. During the pact period, Stalin gave Hitler huge amounts of needed food and raw materials, halted Soviet criticism of fascism and levelled his main at-

tacks on Britain. The Comintern was directed to do likewise, at a terrible cost to Communist parties everywhere, particularly in the West.

Moreover, the USSR did not use the respite to prepare militarily. Production generally, and arms manufacture in particular, stagnated as a result of the purges. The Finnish War demonstrated the effects of the military purge. Top replacements, appointed for bureaucratic reasons, proved totally unfit.

Trepper's espionage center informed Stalin long before the Nazi invasion the date on which it would occur, the troops involved, the plan of attack, etc. He, Medvedev and Elleinstein tell the now well-known story of Stalin's receipt of all this data from Richard Sorge, the Soviet master spy in Tokyo's German embassy, from agents in Berlin, from Roosevelt and Churchill, and even from sources in the German Embassy in Moscow. Stalin insisted the reports were all British plots to divide the USSR from Germany. The air attaché to the Soviet Director of Intelligence left Moscow a few hours before the invasion with a message from Stalin to Trepper expressing amazement that a man of Trepper's intelligence should be so intoxicated by British propaganda.

*When the Nazis invaded, Soviet armed forces were not on alert and Stalin refused for hours to believe the attack had occurred. Incredibly, no contingency plan to meet such an attack existed. The cost of the first weeks of war to the USSR was incalculable. Most planes were destroyed on the ground in the first few hours. Whole armies were surrounded and decimated, often because Stalin refused to approve*

orders to retreat so that they could be preserved.

Typically, he insisted that not one inch of Soviet soil be surrendered. Soviet soldiers took an oath not to be captured alive. Where they broke out of encirclement and made it back to Soviet lines, they were often arrested as German spies. Where captured and later freed, they were arrested for not having committed suicide. In both cases, sentences were heavy. During and after the war, these arrested amounted to several million.

As is known, in six months the Nazis had taken much of the Soviet's west, were besieging Leningrad and were 15 miles from Moscow. The advance was initially disastrous for the Soviet economy but more than 1,500 large factories were effectively transported to the Far East. By 1943 the Soviet arms industry was able to outpace the Nazis in several vital areas. As Elleinstein suggests, the underlying development of education and socialism—despite Stalin, Medvedev maintains—was having its impact. While Soviet resistance was inspired by patriotic appeals, it was equally stimulated as a revolutionary struggle in defense of socialism. Both elements were embraced in rallying the people.

Stalin's virtual paralysis during the first days of the war has been widely reported; he is said to have suffered a nervous breakdown. Though he quickly recovered and assumed the role of commander-in-chief, his leadership was important as symbol but not for its military substance. Khrushchev's indictment of his military role, Medvedev writes, has been confirmed by hundreds of memoirs. The great Soviet victory, which resulted in the crushing of fascism was

a tribute to popular heroism, at least in part doubtless inspired by loyalty to the socialist society. The contribution of Stalin's symbolic leadership was undoubtedly considerable, though the extent cannot be determined.

*Stalin had called off the terrible blood purge in 1939 because of the severe damage to the economy. But the purge did not cease entirely. Thus, Soviet military advisers returning from Spain continued to be victimized. During the war, the labor camps were emptied of needed military men and technicians. But their places were taken by soldiers who had escaped encirclement or had been freed from Nazi prison camps, as well as by Volga Germans, Kalmuks, Crimean Tatars and several other peoples whose Autonomous Republics had been dissolved. Elleinstein estimates that some 2,000,000 of these peoples were thus incarcerated. After the war, those who had had contact with the West—diplomats and intelligence agents—faced long internment. This was Trepper's fate.*

Stalinism emerged from the war intact. Hailed by the Soviet media as "the greatest man of all time," Stalin continued to control party and country through the ministries of State Security and Interior. Every citizen, institution and organization, including every foreigner, was under daily scrutiny. The security apparatus still sent to labor camps "enemies of the people" without public trial; since 1943, sentences could run to 20 years. There was no party apparatus—even the Politburo no longer met—to offer even a formal check to Stalin's arbitrary power. Even top figures continued to disappear, without trial, and sometimes

even without notification to anyone. This was the fate of the nation's top economist and planner, Voznesensky.

*With Stalin using Russian nationalism as a power tool, the communists of non-Russian republics again became targets of repression. Hundreds of thousands of Georgians, Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians and citizens of the Central Asian republics were sent to the camps. As is well-known, the CPs of Eastern Europe were also controlled by the Soviet security police and copied Stalinist repression. The staged trials of leaders of these parties, aping Soviet trials, were evidently designed to prevent a repetition of Tito's independent stand.*

In 1946-47, Stalin and Zhdanov launched a witchhunt against intellectual and cultural figures. One result was the arrest in 1948 of leaders of the Yiddish theater, and the charge of a pro-American Jewish conspiracy. Simon Lozovsky, long the head of the Red International of Labor Unions, and outstanding Yiddish writers and members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested and eventually executed Aug. 12, 1952 as part of this alleged conspiracy. This reflected an anti-Semitic upsurge after the war which Stalin appears to have encouraged. He began to exclude Jews from the party and government apparatus. After the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee arrests, Jews were barred from the diplomatic service and judiciary, and secret quotas were instituted in educational and scientific institutions. In the campaign against "cosmopolitanism," Jewish schools, theaters, newspapers and magazines were closed down.

In the last years of his life, Stalin's anti-Semitism was uninhibited. As is



known, he planned a mass deportation of Jews to remote areas of the Far East. With the initiation of the "doctors' plot" at the end of 1952, thousands of Jews were expelled from hospitals and medical schools as a "prophylactic measure." Books by Jews were removed from publishers' lists and even medications developed by Jewish doctors were banned. In some places Jews were physically attacked. Medvedev supplies a list of Stalin's anti-Semitic manifestations; it is long. It is also a measure of the huge distance that Stalin had travelled from the Leninist origins of the Revolution.

**The economic changes in the USSR** since Civil War days have been striking, particularly in the face of the terrible destruction wrought by World War II. Though in 1953 the population, primarily because of the loss of 23,000,000 in World War II, was less than in 1940, production in various strategic industrial items had more than doubled. But agriculture lagged, with grain production actually lower and cattle only marginally higher. By the mid-1970s the USSR had caught up with, or outstripped, the U.S. in steel, coal and oil output, while still lagging badly in consumer goods and agriculture.

The exaggerated emphasis on heavy industry at the expense of human needs was evidently one effect of Stalinist practice. Because of this practice generally, the economic potential of socialism has been only partially realized. The destruction of personnel and the associated disruption of economic development has been recounted. Perhaps more pervasive and enduring, the supremacy of administrative decisions minimized economic stimuli and de-

nied a corrective role to the masses, particularly the unions. Thus the economy could be mismanaged, towns badly run, collective farms poorly administered since decisions were often made by incompetent, irresponsible, corrupt bureaucrats with no checks on their power. Accountability for effective results was absent after 1929. The check on bureaucracy proposed by Marx and Engels after the Paris Commune and put into practice by Lenin—official salary levels equivalent to workers', universal suffrage with the right of recall—had disappeared by the early '30s. There was no autonomy for enterprises and planning had become extremely bureaucratic.

On top of this, no schools of management, finance or commerce were set up under Stalin, and political economy was taught under police supervision. The Stalinist system led to a denial of economic laws, and often to the substitution of personal caprice for acceptance of reality in planning. The results achieved in the face of such formidable obstacles suggest the potential for socialism if rationally run. While many things have changed in the USSR since Stalin's death, profound Stalinist manifestations remain; they include the promotion of anti-Semitic propaganda.

Obviously, foes of socialism have been able to exploit the bloody cruelties, the dictatorial rule, the mismanagement of the economy, the deprivation suffered by workers and peasants, and the spread of anti-Semitic propaganda. Since for many years the USSR was the only socialist country,\* it was easy to equate socialism with Stalinism. As both Medvedev and Elleinstein note, however, while Stalinism had its roots in the unique circumstances of

revolutionary Russia—the emergence from Tsarism, the lack of democratic experience or traditions, the illiteracy and absence of culture of the people, the devastation of war and civil war, the violence of the White Terror and inescapable response with Red Terror—there was nothing necessary or inevitable about the Stalinist phenomenon. Alternative courses were possible, just as Hitler's rise out of the bourgeois democratic soil of the Weimar Republic (with all its democratic experience and tradition) was not inevitable. Evidently just as capitalism can exist in different political forms, so too can socialist economies. As indicated earlier, Stalinism was a sharp departure from Leninism in many ways. The individual's role cannot be discounted.

Stalin's impact on Communist parties elsewhere was deadly in ways already indicated. Many of these

\* For simplicity's sake, I refer throughout to the USSR as a socialist country, as do Medvedev and Elleinstein with reservations. I consider that while the economy is socialist, the USSR lacks the democratic and humanist values associated with a socialist society.

parties are striving, in varying degree, to cast off its effects. All of them have to contend with resistant members or with deeply ingrained Stalinist features. Those mislabelled "Euro-communist" have gone furthest as they seek to shed the monstrous dogmas, the rigid formula-thinking of Stalinism, and aim to restore the Marxist vision of a genuinely democratic socialism—politically, economically and socially—and one that is guided by a humanist ethic.

In the USSR cultural backwardness has generally been eliminated, thereby creating the conditions for the eventual eradication of Stalinist bureaucratic methods. There are signs of gradual change in that direction and socialists need to pay some attention to these. But many Stalinist rationalizations persist and the efforts to rehabilitate him have by no means died, either in the USSR or elsewhere. Certainly, in developed capitalist countries with democratic traditions, the USSR can in no way serve as a socialist example, as was once projected in Stalin's concept of "socialism in one country." ■

# Readers' Forum on Stalinism

By CHARLES EVANS, IRWIN H. ROSENTHAL, MAX GORDON

## Stalinism and Socialism

For a former editor of the *Daily Worker*, Max Gordon comes a long way toward recognizing the barbarity of Soviet Russian society in his article, "Stalin Dissected" (JEWISH CURRENTS, Oct., 1979). Unfortunately, he still seems to remain in the grip of the kind of Marxist thought which strains for signs that Russia is a "progressive" society.

If the enormous cruelties and follies of Stalin and Stalinism are the natural consequence of socialism, then it is hard to believe that any civilized humane person would favor socialism. Mr. Gordon shies away from the view that Stalin and Stalinism are the natural consequence of socialism, but rather holds that "Stalinism had its roots in the unique circumstances of revolutionary Russia . . ." He continues that "there was nothing necessary or inevitable about the Stalinist phenomenon. Alternative courses were possible . . ."

But if Gordon is right, this too would constitute an indictment of socialism, for it is saying that, contrary to traditional socialist expectations, socialism does not necessarily lead to an improvement of the human social condition, and is compatible with the most monstrous conditions. Indeed at this late stage in human history the idea that technological and social change will necessarily lead to social betterment should be recognized as a myth.

Gordon is still a victim of the Marxist dogma which maintains that economic and social advancement will lead to human betterment. Thus

he asserts that "in the USSR cultural backwardness has generally been eliminated, thereby creating the conditions for the eventual eradication of Stalinist bureaucratic methods."

But surely all of Russia's economic advancement as well as its educational advances have not eliminated certain evils from Russian society. Indeed some of these evils have grown rather than withered away. Among these evils the revival and acceleration of anti-Semitism is most notable, and Jews should have no illusion that Russian policy toward Jews will, somehow naturally, become more benign.

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New York, Oct. 25

## Response by Max Gordon

Prof. Evans makes essentially three criticisms: 1) I shy away from the view that Stalinism is a natural consequence of socialism; 2) I remain wedded to the "Marxist dogma" that socialism necessarily leads to human progress and 3) I strain for signs that Russia is a "progressive" society. • He is accurate regarding the first charge. I do maintain that the unique circumstances of the Russian Revolution made Stalinism possible. In 1923 Lenin, during his final illness, despaired of his country's ability to avoid a stifling, corrupt bureaucracy because of mass cultural backwardness; the civil war destruction of large numbers of the all-too-scarce

socially conscious, politically experienced, dedicated workers; the dependence on corrupt Tsarist administrative bureaucrats for lack of replacement personnel, etc.

From his sickbed, Lenin warned against Stalin and urged his replacement as party General Secretary. As I described, accident prevented delivery of the warning when it might have been effective. Stalin's ruthless, unscrupulous drive for power was facilitated by the chaotic conditions attendant upon a decade of devastating imperialist and civil war. Stalin was able to use his position to build his personal machine and scatter possible opponents.

• Prof. Evans correctly says that socialism, contrary to traditional expectations, does not necessarily improve the human social condition. While socialism does so in some respects, it does not necessarily do so in all respects, nor in short order. Based on Marx's analysis of capitalist society, it was once assumed that socialism would arise initially in the most developed capitalist countries and would build on that development. This, we know, is not what happened. Countries where socialism has come by popular action have, in the main, been underdeveloped and have lacked a democratic political culture. Socialism as foreseen in the Marxist analysis has not yet been experienced, and Prof. Evans' dismissal of its effects respecting human betterment is premature.

A second consideration: Marxists have tended to expect from socialist societies at the outset what is possible only after a lengthy development process. They ignore Marx's warning that the new society will

emerge from the womb of the old, with the economic, moral and intellectual birthmarks of the old stamped upon it. Extensive human reconditioning will be necessary for the realization of a radically new society. This is especially true for underdeveloped societies.

Yet there are numerous indications of human betterment in some societies where socialism has been experienced. One example: two unrelated *N. Y. Times* reports in April, 1977 described conditions in Cuba and in oil-rich Venezuela, the wealthiest and presumably the most democratic Latin American nation. From Caracas, Juan de Onis wrote that Venezuela's Pres. Perez attributed the city's high rate of crime and juvenile delinquency to the "monstrous inequality" between rich and poor. A third of the 1.4 million people live in shantytowns ringed by the modern concrete city. Over half the children are born out of wedlock, large numbers are abandoned, mothers are without child support. A shantytown resident told De Onis that many find life "a hell." With parents unable to earn a living, children turn to crime (April 30, 1977).

From Havana, Paul Montgomery wrote (April 20, 1977): "Citizens appear well provided with essentials. There are no beggars or urchins on the streets, and everyone appears neatly if simply dressed. Education and dental and medical care are free, public transportation is cheap and factories and schools provide good meals. An average factory worker might make \$150 a month. Ten percent goes to the state for rent and 5% for furniture, which generally includes a refrigerator and a television set. There are no taxes and the range of free state services stretches income a long way." Whereas Cara-

cas and other major Latin American cities are ringed with shantytowns, Montgomery tells us Havana is ringed with dairy farms under intensive development to guarantee milk supplies, yogurt and ice cream for the children.

*Times* correspondent Alan Riding observed earlier (Jan. 2, 1977): "Everywhere in Latin America except Cuba millions of rural inhabitants are still excluded from the economic and political lives of their countries." The difference, he explained, is that only Cuba has carried through its agrarian revolution. While the media have made much of those who recently sought to flee Cuba for various reasons, they have said less of the undoubted massive progress Cuba has made in universal education, health, popular social participation and relative equality.

The Cuban Revolution went through painful fumbling for more than a decade before stabilizing, its economic viability is still not established and there are distinct shortcomings in its political practices. But to date it does demonstrate that whereas social change may not necessarily lead to human betterment, the potential is there. In the face of current world and domestic instability, it is unnecessary to argue in detail that failure to effect social change will mean expanding human misery.

• I am charged with straining for signs that Russia is a "progressive" society. I made it plain that there is much to condemn in the USSR, including the officially sanctioned anti-Semitism. But I also suggested that socialists need to be alert to internal developments there. Soviet society is complex and dynamic, with changes occurring in various directions. An expanding literature of So-

viet studies by American scholars, financed by establishment foundations and the State Department, provides some insight into these changes. Their findings do not reach the public and are intended to provide accurate information for those in power here. Thus, a review in *Contemporary Sociology* (July, 1979) of Murray Janovitch's *Social and Economic Equality in the Soviet Union: Six Studies* observed that while the work contained much criticism of Soviet practice, it makes these points: 1) there is wider ongoing discussion than in the West on income inequality, job "humanization" and worker participation in management; 2) gradual reduction of wage inequalities is now a natural feature of Soviet development; 3) there is a recent "upsurge" of efforts to broaden worker participation in management, including election of managers and increasing trade union power.

A series of "Sovietology" studies is reviewed in *Science & Society* (Winter, 1978-79), describing such changes as a significant increase in popular participation in the Soviets and an increase in the Soviets' political role, a widening and deepening of public debate in the media, an expansion of trade union responsibility, etc.

The famed Soviet dissenter Roy Medvedev cites approvingly an essay circulated as *samizdat* which warns against tarring everyone in authority with the same brush. Many are moved by the "powerful moral legacy of socialist ideas, the grandeur of socialist goals still proclaimed to be the objectives of our society." The essay declares that a restrained but steady replenishment is occurring within bureaucratic ranks as scientific elite exhibiting "quite different qualities" increasingly merges with

it (*On Socialist Democracy*, 1975, pages 296 ff.).

The point is not that I strain too much for signs of progress in Soviet society (perhaps I do), but that the repression and corruption, the disillusionment, have so thoroughly turned socialists off that any suggestion of change—behind the corruption and repression—is scorned.

### **Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact**

In Max Gordon's fine article, "Stalin Dissected" (Oct., 1979), the following sentence appears. "The Nazi-Soviet Non-aggression Pact was doubtless justified by the obvious intent of the West to push Hitler into a war with the USSR (emphasis mine).

If Gordon believes that the final judgment of history has been rendered and that the pact has been found justified, he is talking plain "mishogas."

If Western encouragement of a Nazi-Soviet war was as evident as Gordon believes why was not a single voice heard to suggest such a union prior to the moment of the pact's announcement? Because such a reversal of policy would have been unthinkable in a democratic socialist state.

Gordon's distinction between the pact's public and secret parts is not valid since the USSR would not have accepted the first part if the second part hadn't been included. In reality the Nazi-Soviet Pact was the cynical act of two totalitarian states vastly different though they were.

IRWIN H. ROSENTHAL  
*Ellenville, N.Y., Dec. 6*

### **Response by Max Gordon**

Mr. Rosenthal's critique suggests that he is not familiar with, or has

forgotten, the intense drive of the USSR and the world Communist movement, from 1934 to 1939, for collective security against the fascist axis. We cannot here go into the history of that period—the anti-fascist United and Popular Fronts, the Munich policy of the British and French governments designed to encourage Hitler's *Drang Nach Osten* (drive to the east), the numerous Soviet efforts to develop alliances with the British and French to stop the anti-Comintern axis, etc., but will touch briefly on a few relevant developments leading to the Nazi-Soviet pact.

When Hitler seized Austria and created a crisis over Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, Stalin repeated earlier proposals for a united front with Britain and France in defense of Czechoslovakia. The proposal was rejected and the Munich Conference held without invitation to the USSR. This effectively killed the Soviet's mutual aid pacts, signed in 1935, with France and Czechoslovakia, though the USSR had declared itself ready to come to Prague's aid if France did, as called for in the accords. As Churchill later observed, "There can . . . be no doubt . . . that Britain and France should have accepted the Russian offer, proclaimed the triple alliance. . . . The Soviet government were convinced by Munich and much else that neither Britain nor France would fight till they were attacked and would not be much good then" (*The Gathering Storm*, 1948, pages 262, 266).

Ian Grey, a sympathetic British biographer of Stalin, notes that Stalin had no doubt after Munich that Britain and France had promised Hitler a free hand in the East in return for peace in the West (*Stalin*, 1978, p. 303). Kermit McKenzie, a non-

sympathetic historian of the Comintern, writes more modestly that "some" in the West "viewed with satisfaction the prospect of a German expansion at the expense of the Soviet Union" (*Comintern and World Revolution*, 1964, p. 142).

Early in 1939, Poland's foreign minister went to Berlin with the apparent aim of signing an agreement with Hitler directed against the USSR. At this point, evidently, Stalin began to entertain the idea of a deal with Hitler himself. In his 18th Party Congress report in March, he saw war as almost certain—with the fascist states as the aggressor and the "non-aggressive" states appeasing them at every turn. The latter's aim, he said, was to have Germany and the USSR "weaken and exhaust one another . . ."

But, he declared, no visible grounds existed for war between Germany and the USSR. While still pressing for alliance with Britain, France and the United States, he did not exclude the possibility of coming to terms with Germany. Those of us politically active at the time may recall the intense discussions aroused by this

18th Congress report with its implications of rapprochement with Nazi Germany if collective security was finally rejected by the West.

The Nazis initially approached the USSR for discussions late in May and received a non-committal reply. But early in August, Stalin proposed discussions with Britain, France and Poland on mutual action in the face of Hitler's intent to attack Poland. The British sent an elderly retired admiral to Moscow without instructions. It was obvious to Stalin they were not serious about stopping Hitler. In response to an Aug. 15 note from Hitler, Stalin proposed a commercial agreement, a non-aggression pact and an agreement defining spheres of interest.

The Nazi-Soviet pact was thus Stalin's alternative to what appeared a clear intent to push Hitler to war with the USSR. Rosenthal may be right that the USSR would not have accepted the public aspects without the secret clauses defining spheres of interest, but there is no way of knowing this. ■

## Stalinism and the Jewish Question

### Lenin's Basic Principles Violated

By LOUIS HARAP

*" . . . There is only one solution of the national question . . . and that solution is consistent democracy. . . . The national program of the Marxist . . . demands . . . equality of nations and languages, prohibition of all privileges altogether in this respect. . . . The proletariat welcomes any kind of assimilation of nations except forcible assimilation. . . . Inseparably connected with the principle of complete equality is the guaranteeing of the rights of a national minority . . . every citizen would be able to demand the rescinding of orders that could prohibit hiring, at state expense, of special teachers of the Jewish language, Jewish history, or the provision of state-owned premises for lectures for Jewish, Armenian or Romanian, or even for one Georgian child."*

—Lenin, 1913

IN this centenary year of Stalin's birth Dec. 21, 1879, all the world, particularly socialists, and even more particularly Jewish socialists and JEWISH CURRENTS, is taking stock of the impress made by Stalin, especially from the late 1930s until his death in 1953. In these pages, Max Gordon has given us a general estimate of his significance [Oct.], and Sid Resnick and A. B. Magil have discussed the

present state of Biro-Bidzhan and the current anti-Semitic campaign in the Soviet Union, respectively [July-Aug. and May].

Now we take a deep look at the historical development of the predicament of Soviet Jews. How could it happen that the unequivocal principles of equality of nationalities, including the Jewish nationality, as set forth by Lenin in 1913, could deteriorate into the present dangerous prevalence of anti-Semitic propaganda in the guise of a patently false version of anti-Zionism and into the minimal opportunities for cultural and communal expression of the Jewish nationality in the USSR?

The socialist position on the Jewish question as understood by Lenin had two essential aspects. First, he believed, as indeed many socialists have held and even now agree, that the solution of the Jewish question, both inevitable and desirable, is assimilation into the majority nationality. In this view, relative freedom from persecution under advanced capitalism is conducive to absorption of Jews into the majority nationality so that all Jewish cultural and ethnic features will gradually disappear. Under socialism, this view holds, complete freedom from all class and national privilege and total

equality for Jews with all other citizens will consummate the process of assimilation and Jews will merge totally with the majority nationality.

Second, Lenin asserted categorically that such assimilation must *not* be forced. That is, it must *not be imposed* from above. He believed that under fully democratic conditions no kind of privilege would be tolerated. The distinction between voluntary assimilation, that is, the process presumed to occur under democratic conditions, and forced assimilation is essential to our understanding of the problem. Voluntary assimilation requires absence of any pressures of any kind in the form of punishment or reward upon the minority nationality to conform and be absorbed into the majority culture. Legal disability, however, except in extreme cases like fascism, is not the main problem for Jews because it is rare in modern capitalist or socialist governments. More dangerous and sinister are those subtle pressures outside the law in tacit social practice—under both capitalism and socialism—which in actuality intimidate Jews with social disabilities. Such pressures, whether tacit or overt, constitute privilege for the majority nation. For Jews to be exposed to such pressures is a form of forced assimilation.

*In the Soviet Union forced assimilation* has taken the form not only of prejudiced behavior against Jews but even—and most sinister—of administrative diminution and even elimination of the indispensable vehicles and institutions which sustain nationality—language instruction, schools, a press, theater and other cultural forms. This pressure has been administered at varying speeds since the late 1930s on the

pretext of Jewish lack of interest or audience.

In the post World War II years, instead of reviving the institutions that had been destroyed by the Nazi invasion, the Stalinist regime completed the process after 1948 by simply closing down what remained of Jewish institutions, the press and theater. This was crude forced assimilation. So drastic was the Stalinist intention in this regard—and sadly, this still remains true—that Jewish identity is being suppressed by as little mention as possible—usually in denigration—of Jews or Jewishness.

*What has happened to the Jews* in the Soviet Union since the late 1930s is in direct contradiction to the basic principles of Lenin—or of any democratic, Marxist approach to the problem. There is a certain irony in this. In 1913, Stalin wrote his famous essay on the national question under Lenin's direction and final approval. Stalin asserted the assimilationist principle more drastically and dogmatically than Lenin: "The Jewish nation is coming to an end, and therefore there is nobody to demand autonomy for." Stalin also reiterated that "no one has the right *forcibly* to interfere in the life of the nation, to *destroy* its schools and other institutions, to *violate* its habits and customs, to *repress* its language, or *curtail* its rights" (emphasis in original). He assigned these prohibitions with respect to the "nation," but they apply with equal force to nationality, whose equality "*in all forms*" he also asserted. Finally, "a state law based on complete democracy in the country is required, prohibiting all national privileges without exception and . . . restrictions on the rights of national minorities." (Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the Na-*

*tional and Colonial Question*, N. Y., n.d., pages 35, 18, 58, 58-59.)

These are the rock-bottom principles on which socialism was presumed to operate. Under Stalinism, as every one knows, they were observed more in the breach than in observance. But they *were* observed in the early years of the Revolution. The Bolsheviks fought anti-Semitism, not only in defense of the Jews, but because this was a weapon of the pogromist counter-revolution. As a matter of principle one of the first acts of the new regime was to remove all disabilities from Jews and to make anti-Semitism a crime, and anti-Semites were frightened into repression of their prejudice for a time.

Further, nationality rights of all sorts were accorded the Jews as they were to all nationalities. By 1933, for instance, in the Ukraine there were 154 Jewish "Village Soviets." Thousands of Jews were settled on the land and recruited for factories. Jewish "national districts" were set up in the Crimea and the Ukraine. By the mid-1930s there were about 500 Jewish collective farms. In many areas Yiddish was the official language of administration and the courts.

A Jewish culture in Yiddish was generously supported by the state. The Ukraine alone had 250 Jewish schools by 1925. There was a varied periodical press, 10 Yiddish newspapers, and the Ukrainian Academy of Science sponsored an Institute of Jewish Culture. A galaxy of Jewish poets, fiction writers, and critics and intellectuals flourished in a Yiddish cultural renaissance.

In 1926, Soviet Pres. Mikhail Kalinin proposed assignment of Biro-Bidzhan as a Jewish autonomous region to counteract "assimilation

and national erosion" and establish a base for "the struggle to maintain its national identity." Strategic considerations—building a defense outpost in the Far East against Japan—as well, led in 1934 to official declaration of the area as a "Jewish Autonomous Region."

*Despite the strong and widely held* belief among socialists, Lenin among them, that a democratic Jewish future lay in assimilation, an equally democratic imperative of granting nationality rights to Soviet Jews was simultaneously followed in the practical affairs of the new socialist republic. Confronted by the Jewish reality, the new regime implemented the nationality rights of the Jews by providing unprecedented facilities for realizing these rights. But a dual process was taking place. At the same time as Jewish cultural life was vigorous, assimilation was also going forward. Who knows what might have happened if this dual process had been allowed to proceed without hindrance? Would assimilation have become dominant? As it happens, the violation of Jewish nationality rights and permissiveness toward anti-Semitism produced the effect exactly opposite to that desired—they revived a flagging Jewish awareness among many Soviet Jews on the way to assimilation.

The democratic process was gradually curtailed. There were some in the *Yevsektzia* (Party Jewish Sections, administrators of Jewish affairs) who viewed this period in the adjustment of Jewish nationality to socialism as a prelude to the end of Jewishness, the sooner the better, and they acted to make it come sooner.

By the end of the 1930s, Stalin was beginning to take steps toward

liquidation of Jewish life. While Stalin was engaged in elimination of his opposition in the purges from 1936 onward, during which all sorts of innocent people were swept up in his monstrous police and prison system, many Jews were dispatched to execution or the camps.

It is difficult to extricate the anti-Semitic motive in the paranoid orgy of suspicion, imprisonment and execution. When the entire Jewish leadership of Biro-Bidzhan was swept into oblivion in 1937, was the cause anti-Semitism, Stalinist paranoia or both? Many Jewish leaders utterly loyal to Stalin, such as S. Dimonshtein, disappeared. Toward the end of the 1930s a contraction of facilities for Jewish culture, not entirely accountable by the shrinking but still substantial audience for Yiddish, began to be felt. The Leninist policy of *voluntary* assimilation, as well as other basic principles of socialism, were being eroded under the growth of Stalinist centralized power. In other words, a policy of *forced* assimilation was beginning. This was true in part also for other Soviet nationalities, and Great Russian chauvinism gathered strength.

What had happened? Stalin had branded anti-Semitism akin to "cannibalism" in 1931. By the 1940s, however, anti-Semitism had become a component of his paranoia. His false theory of the intensification of class struggle under socialism was the "theoretical" cover for his ruthless drive to sweep everything before him in the quest for absolute power. Thus, anyone who, in the paranoid mind of Stalin or his major and minor imitators, might be suspected of at some time standing in the way of this power was put away. More and more a tolerant or permissive attitude toward the overt expression

of anti-Semitism grew up, and at worst, anti-Semitism itself was actively brought into play. All this was buttressed by a rationale of assimilation.

**A turning point was reached in 1939** with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. From then to the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union June 21, 1941, Jewish suffering at the hands of the Nazis dropped out of public attention—the subject was virtually taboo in deference to Nazi sensibilities. Even the term "fascism" was rarely used. Once the Nazis attacked, however, Jewish voices were once again heard in condemnation of Nazi brutalization of Jews, and appeals were addressed to world Jewry for support in the common struggle against Nazism. Soviet Jewish participation in the war itself was impressive; a half million Jews served in the armed forces and 160,772 were awarded decorations; 121 were Heroes of the Soviet Union. There were over 50 Jewish generals. Jews also fought in the Partisan units.

Yet there is evidence that anti-Semitism was rife in the armed forces. In the Nazi-occupied areas, Russian anti-Semitism, far from uprooted, once again flourished, fertilized by Nazi propaganda. The tragedy was that this anti-Semitism was not resisted by Soviet counter-propaganda. During the war mention of the Jews practically dropped out of the Soviet press. Why? Did the Soviet authorities fear that defense of the Jews might reduce popular morale? Or was concurrence with anti-Semitism itself by the authorities part of the explanation? Whatever the reason, Jews became scapegoats: to allow sleeping dogs to lie, Jews special suffering at the hands of the

Nazis barely received mention in the Soviet press.

On the international side the policy was different. Shortly after the Nazi attack prominent Soviet Jewish writers and intellectuals and artists issued an appeal to the Jews of all the world for solidarity and resistance against the Nazi assault on "all mankind" and in particular on "our unfortunate brothers." In 1942 the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee's formation was announced, with prominent Soviet Jews in the leadership, to sustain this appeal to Jews of the world to help win the war. The visit of Soviet Yiddish State Theater director and actor Solomon Mikhoels and Yiddish poet Col. Itzik Feffer to England and the United States in 1943 on behalf of the Committee was a highly publicized event. Thus, Soviet policy toward the Jews was accommodated separately to domestic and to foreign policy—suppression of mention of Jews at home out of fear of injuring morale because of anti-Semitism, and constant, widely publicized appeals to Jews in the rest of the world to exert themselves to the utmost in the war against Nazi barbarity.

From the end of World War II to 1948, Jews returning from the war met resistance in their efforts to restore Jewish institutions destroyed by the Nazis. However, the Yiddish publishing house Emes survived, and 110 Yiddish books were published from 1945 to 1948. But by 1948 a series of active anti-Semitic campaigns began at home at the same time that the Soviet Union gave indispensable diplomatic and even military aid to Israel. All through 1947 and 1948 the Soviet Union supported the birth of Israel by decisive diplomatic aid to the United Nations move to create independent Jewish

and Arab States in Israel. And after the State was established, an Israeli army under attack from invading Arab forces had its depleted stock of arms renewed by Czechoslovakia. A case can be made that Israel might never have been allowed to be born, or might not have survived after birth, were it not for Soviet diplomatic and military help.

The reason for this help was not only, as Gromyko said in the UN in 1947, to respond to the "legitimate aspirations of the Jewish people for the creation of this state . . . especially taking into consideration all the Jews have suffered in World War II." Certainly decisive was this major opportunity to weaken British imperialism by its removal from the Middle East, and to combat the reactionary Arab satraps of imperialism, as well as to open the way to Soviet influence in this strategic area on its Southern border.

**A contradictory policy toward the Jews** was simultaneously followed at home. Soviet authorities feared that the favorable Soviet actions on the Middle East issue would encourage spread of Zionism among the Jews. In 1948 the presupposition of international activity of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee—that there was a world Jewish people which could be appealed to in defense of its "brothers" against a common enemy—was contradicted by the momentous article of Ilya Ehrenburg in *Pravda* on Sept. 21, 1948 denying the existence of a world Jewish people. Ehrenburg argued against the "mystic" Jewish notion of nationality that Jews in various countries had nothing in common except the threat of anti-Semitism. This article turned out to be the harbinger of the most drastic attack on Jewish identity to date.\*

There had been premonitory signs. The great actor Mikhoels had been murdered on the streets of Minsk in Jan., 1948. Jewish schools had not been reopened after the war. By 1948, only the Emes publishing house, the newspaper *Eynikayt* and the State Yiddish Theater remained. By the end of the year, the Anti-Fascist Committee had been liquidated, *Eynikayt* was suspended and the Emes Publishing house was closed down, and in the next year, the State Theater was shut. Destruction of all Jewish institutions, except the *Biro-Bidzhaner Shtern* and the synagogue, was accomplished.

Protests gathered all over the world and increased after Khrushchev's revelations in 1956. Nearly the entire Anti-Fascist Committee had been imprisoned and/or executed, as were the entire creative leadership of Yiddish culture. The basic charge was "nationalism," and some were falsely charged with attempting to make the Crimea into a separate Jewish state. No Yiddish books were published for about a decade. Forced assimilation appeared to have completed its work by administrative fiat.

Why this effort to destroy Jewish identity at home? Various reasons were offered in the USSR as covers for a series of anti-Semitic campaigns. There was a paranoid fear of Jewish national identity inter-

\* Ehrenburg's record on Soviet Jews is not altogether as negative as his authorship of the *Pravda* article might imply. Among countervailing considerations are: his complaint that the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was "not a Jewish Committee but an anti-Jewish Committee" because he thought its activities deficient in Jewishness; his refusal to cooperate with Stalin's plans in 1953 for "relocation" of Jews to the Far East; and his exposure of Stalinism and Soviet anti-Semitism in *The Thaw* (1954) and his memoirs in the 1960s.

preted as "Zionism," which was invested by Soviet propagandists with possession of some mysterious power, and which would in any case divert Jews from Stalinist orthodoxy. Another weak rationale was the claim that Jews were "cosmopolitans" and therefore disloyal to the Soviet Union. Restraints against anti-Semitism gradually weakened so that by 1953 the "Doctors' Plot" threatened to erode this resistance to the danger point.\* For we now know that Stalin was exploring the project, after conviction of the Doctors, of "relocating" Jews from Soviet cities to the Far East. Only Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 put an end to these sinister plans.

By this time, the policy of the Soviet Union toward Israel was also

\* Readers long familiar with *JEWISH CURRENTS* and its pre-1957 *Jewish Life* are aware that, from its founding in 1946 to the Khrushchev exposure of Stalinism in 1956 and the revelation of Soviet anti-Semitism in the USSR in the Polish Yiddish weekly *Folkshimme* (English translation in our May, 1956 issue), our magazine had been an unwitting apologist for Stalinism and Soviet treatment of the Jews. Our totally uncritical attitude toward events in the Soviet Union was prompted by a naive faith in the post-Lenin leadership of the USSR and in their efforts to realize socialism. We refused to believe many devastating facts about the Stalinist actuality because they were revealed by anti-Soviet and non-Soviet sources. Only when Soviet sources themselves exposed at least part of the truth did we finally realize how totally we had been taken in by an exploitation of our socialist convictions. In our June, 1956 issue we published our editorial apology to our readership, "Review and Reappraisal." Since then we have faced this situation with candor. We have made a special effort to seek out the facts about the Soviet Jewish situation and have kept our readers informed of developments, both positive and negative. We have repeatedly urged editorially the rectification of the status of Soviet Jews.

changing. After a few years of following a "neutralist" policy, called "non-identification with East or West," Israel abandoned it by a vote in the Knesset on Nov. 6, 1951, and became a full-fledged member of the pro-Western bloc in Cold War politics. Soviet support shifted from Israel to those Arab states which overthrew their reactionary old regimes. One of the standard false charges made against Jews in the Soviet dock regularly became "spying" for "Zionism." Soviet anti-Semitic propaganda took on an increasingly "anti-Zionist" cast. Totally uncritical support by the USSR of Arab policy soon followed, despite Arab determination to destroy the Jewish state which the Soviet Union helped to make possible, and whose right to exist the USSR still supported, as it does in principle to this day.

A steady stream of protest went on for years against the Soviet treatment of Jews from many parts of the world, from governments, and, following the Khrushchev report, even from Communist parties. These protests finally bore reluctant fruit when, in 1959, several Yiddish books appeared. Jewish singers and actors toured Soviet cities with Yiddish programs before packed houses, contradicting claims of Jewish "lack of interest." In 1961, *Sovetish Heimland*, a literary journal in Yiddish, began to appear bi-monthly (and monthly in 1965), publishing about 100 Yiddish authors. A trickle of Yiddish books appeared each year. But this did not mean that the policy of forced assimilation had been abandoned. The fact that Khrushchev in his 1956 speech did not even mention Stalin's crimes against

the Jews was evidence of the continuity with Stalinist practice on the issue of forced assimilation. The cultural concessions to the Jews were meager, and meant only to counteract protest: it was, and is still, the intention of the Soviet authorities to efface Jewish identity by attrition, if not all at once.

Together with these grudging cultural provisions, the "anti-Zionist" campaign went on. The most egregious anti-Semitism at this time, however, came from the so-called anti-religious tracts. A sort of climax was reached in 1963 in a book which charged Judaism with every social crime in the calendar, Trofim Kichko's *Judaism Without Embellishment*. So crude, blatant and wild was the book's anti-Semitism that it evoked protests from all over the world, including, after a time, from Communist parties, the CPUSA among them. The book was condemned officially even in the Soviet Union. But this proved to be proforma. Anti-Semitic articles and books continued to pour forth from the Soviet presses unabated, including several by Kichko himself.

*The campaign reached a new level* after the Arab defeat in the 1967 war. Anti-Judaism and anti-Zionism were now fused in a single hysterical thrust. Foreign policy motives for anti-Semitism ("anti-Zionism" in the interest of uncritical pro-Arab policy in which everything Israel says or does is wrong) and for domestic anti-Semitism (forced assimilation and reluctance to resist widespread anti-Semitism for fear of weakening popular support for the government) were joined. Through the entire gamut of the Soviet press, anti-Semitic articles under the guise of "anti-Zionism" proliferated: from Com-

munist Party and Government organs, *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, to the mass journal *Ogonyok*; to mass youth newspapers like *Komsomolskaya Pravda*; to the Red Army newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda*; to cultural journals like *Sovetskaya Kultura*; to Party leadership guides like *Agitator*; to learned journals. Between 1975 and 1978 no fewer than 50 anti-Semitic books were published in the Soviet Union.

What is even more profoundly shocking in this gush of anti-Semitism is its revival of the main themes of the notorious forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—that the “Zionists” (read Jews) were seeking world domination and were corrupting the morals and mind of the non-Jewish world. One Vladimir Begun, in a book published in Moscow in 1977 in 150,000 copies, wrote that Israel is a “predatory octopus whose tentacles, the Zionist organizations, have enmeshed half the world and suck the sap of life . . . The Zionist movement’s main strategic role (is) establishing dominion over the world. . . . Especially repulsive is the chauvinistic idea of the dominion over the world formulated by the ‘holy scriptures’ and reflected in prayers.”

So far has this vicious campaign gone that Lev Kopelev, the respected Jewish dissident, told in an interview (*N.Y. Times*, June 27) the startling story of a pamphlet, issued by an anonymous “Russian Liberation Movement,” charging that “Zionists” have taken control of the Politburo and that Pres. Leonid Brezhnev is the “chief Zionist.” It now appears that “Zionism” threatens to perform a similar function in the Soviet Union as “Communism” did in the United States. One is reminded of the John Birch Society’s charge that Eisen-

hower was a “Communist” and of Joe McCarthy’s charge of “Communism” against Gen. George Marshall. In May a letter was circulated among Moscow’s intellectuals charging that “a powerful Zionist lobby” exists in the Party Central Committee apparatus. One may well wonder what forces are at work at the top of Soviet power preparing to pass beyond anti-Semitic propaganda to something more drastic for the Jews, now that Pres. Brezhnev is on the verge of retirement and decisions must be made about a new leadership. Would they take up the cause where Stalin left off? Will this centenary of Stalin’s birth be “celebrated” by a return to Stalin’s anti-Jewish activism?

*Dark as the present situation is*, it is not without some hope. In the winter of 1978, a novel, *Heavy Sand*, by the Russian Jewish writer Anatoly N. Rybakov, broke the virtual taboo since the middle of World War II against mention of Jewish suffering under the Nazis, or even Jewish contributions to the war.\* The novel delineates the experience and suffering of Jews in a small Ukrainian town occupied by the Nazis. Rybakov gives a rounded picture of the

\* It is true that Jews have generally been treated as “positive” heroes in Soviet literature. A study by the B’nai B’rith International Council, *The Jew in Post-Stalin Literature*, by Prof. Maurice Friedberg, in 1970 confirms that, “considering the generally anti-Semitic tenor of Soviet journalism in the last two decades, there have been relatively few anti-Semitic literary works published.” Unfortunately, humanistic treatment of Jews in this work is restricted to individuals. The Rybakov novel is exceptional in that a whole Jewish community during the war is depicted, thus revealing the special suffering of the Jews as such.

people in this Nazi ghetto and the variety\* of behavior by its Jews, heroic and deplorable. The author received many congratulatory messages from both Jews and non-Jews. One Jewish parent wrote him, “If my children had read your novel, they wouldn’t have left for Israel.”

It is well that Jews are still allowed, though with much obloquy and harassment, to emigrate in large numbers. Enjoyment of nationality rights to which Jews are entitled would no doubt considerably reduce the number of emigrants. Although discrimination against Jews in education and some professions does exist, in many areas the Jews do enjoy equality. It is a curious fact that, despite propaganda and discrimination, Party membership among Jews is proportionately higher than in any other Soviet nationality, though Party leadership at higher levels is denied them and they are represented in the Soviets at various levels in very low proportion to their numbers. Still published are *Sovetish Heimland*, an occasional book in Yiddish, the Yiddish *Biro-Bidzhaner Shtern* (which is simply a Yiddish version of the Russian paper with minimal Jewish content). A number of Yiddish professional actors and singers perform in concert tours. There are amateur Yiddish acting companies in Vilna, Moscow, Kovno,

Biro-Bidzhan and other places. But such activity goes on in an atmosphere of general hostility, and persists in spite of, and not because of, the Soviet attitude toward a surviving Jewish culture.

But the intensity of “anti-Zionist” that is in fact anti-Semitic propaganda grows and assumes the debased form of the *Protocols* in “Marxist” dress. As has been amply documented, since the 1950s the Jew has almost totally dropped out of Soviet school history texts, as if they had barely existed. A policy of forced assimilation goes on unabated. The effect has been harmful not only to Soviet Jews, but to the idea of socialism itself, which tends to be discredited among many people of good will who are not fully aware that anti-Semitism is itself anti-Marxist, anti-socialist.

The task of socialists in the capitalist world is thereby rendered far more difficult. The centenary of Stalin’s birth occurs at a time when a change in Soviet leadership is imminent. If the lessons of Stalinism are learned—and there is little evidence that they really have been—one imperative job that needs doing is for Soviet officials to put an end to the anti-Semitic propaganda that is debasing to the Soviet people and to restore full national rights to the Soviet Jewish people, with a renewal of appropriate cultural institutions. ■